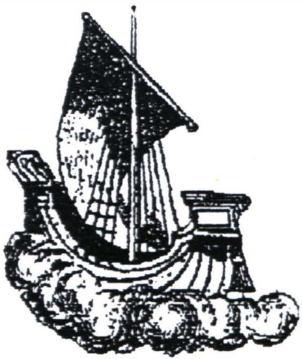




Magonia 49

Interpreting Contemporary Vision and Belief.

June 1994

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Sense and Satanism



Alienating Fantasies

Martin Kottmeyer

In Search of the Real UFOs

John Harney

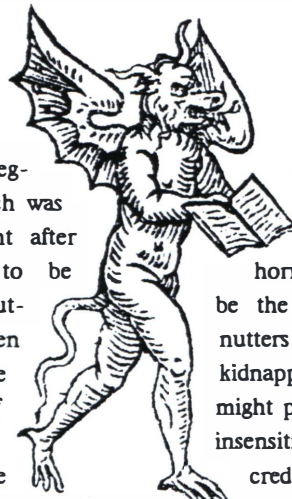
Sex, Science and Salvation

Peter Rogerson

Letters

25 Years Ago

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THE long-awaited report on allegations of Satanic child abuse which was commissioned by the government after the Orkney Island cases, is to be published shortly. Already the outline of its conclusions has been leaked to the press, and from the summaries we have seen most of the allegations of an organised network of ritual abusers have been discounted.

The author of the report, Jean Lafontaine, is a respected social scientist, who appears to have had unprecedented access to information from all sides in the various cases she has reviewed. We are sure that her report will be as near definitive on this subject as it is possible to be.

The press's reaction to the advance leaks is more worrying. With one or two exceptions it can be summarised as "The experts say Satanic abuse doesn't exist, so that's all right then", neatly forgetting that it was the assertions of "experts" that started the whole scare off in the first place. The fact is that in this subject there are no "experts", and the main problem has been that in discussing Satanic abuse there are so few people with the perspective to place the subject in the context of other frames of belief and experience.

On the one hand there are sincere social workers - after all, not every one of them can be a Bible-bashing fundamentalist or a crazed neo-Marxist feminist! - who may be working with children who have suffered from

almost unbelievable extremes of abuse. Understandably they regard suggestions that the *real* horrors they *are* uncovering might be the same thing as the ravings of nutters who claim that they have been kidnapped by little green men (as they might put it), as being at least incredibly insensitive and at worst a means of discrediting the help they are giving to genuinely abused children.

On the other hand there are sociologists (and Magonians) who *can* see how the memories of disturbed children and adults can be manipulated, consciously or unconsciously, and produce stories that recur in a variety of contexts - contexts which up to now have been largely ignored by those working in the mainstream of psychology and sociology. They naturally are concerned that social workers and others do not know of these connections, and that they are making decisions that affect peoples' lives without that awareness.

In the next *Magonia* we shall be looking at the forthcoming Report, and at a recent textbook for social workers on dealing with "victims of Satanic abuse". Both of these books have been written by "experts", yet our first impression is that they come to opposite conclusions. In this field, as in many we deal with, we should be considering how the experts come to their conclusions, the evidence they introduce, the way they obtain that evidence and how they use and present it.

Magonia

Interpreting Contemporary Vision and Belief

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PETER ROGERSON'S
NORTHERN ECHOES

AS ufology produces ever-stranger stories, we have noticed two opposite reactions. One, that I have commented on before, is the BUFORA-Hopkins reaction: that of taking them at face value and largely abandoning any attempt to actually investigate them. An example of the second type of response is shown in a recent *International UFO Reporter* editorial by Jerome Clark. He not only renews his denunciation of 'occultists' and 'paranormalists', but now extends his critique to traditional ufologists, 'paleo-ufologists', who have been swept away by the drama of abduction claims.

In their detailed textual analyses and computer surveys of Clark's recent writings, *Magonia's* dedicated band of CUFOS-watchers (many of them retired Kremlinologists) believe that Clark, notorious for his denunciations of revisionist hysteria, and principle spokesperson for the J Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies, is preparing perhaps for the most spectacular revisionism of them all: the denunciation of the former leader for anti-ufological occultism, deviationism, anti-ETH thought crime and general revisionist psychosis. Of course, as in all great revisions the attack starts on the departed leader's acolytes in the form of coded messages, but who can doubt that the secret speech is in preparation. No doubt it will not be too long, inspired by recent changes in Russia, that the J Allen Hynek Center will be renamed the Donald E Keyhoe Center for UFO Studies.

Behind the great revision is the great retreat; a slink back to the last redoubt, some defensible core in which ufologists can shelter from the hail of sceptical missiles. This last bastion is 'Close Encounters of the Second Kind', and radar-visuals. But these are as weak and wobbly a shelter as any UN safe haven. Sceptics have only to point out that most of these stories are just that, stories. Unless they leave permanent traces they are jyet more unproven eyewitness testimony. Such testimony, we are told, is enough to convict people in court. Quite, that's why there are

so many innocent people in jail and many guilty ones roaming the streets. So out go the radar-visuals and the EM cases, which never recovered from Menzel and were finished off by Hendry.

The next line of defence are the holes in the ground. In most of these cases there is no evidence that the hole was connected with anything which could be called a UFO. Even if they were connected with a UFO report there is precious little evidence that they formed simultaneously with it. No doubt some of these were created by interesting natural phenomena - even Meaden vortices. No doubt a significant number are hoaxes.

So as the tanks roll in, the ufological Alamo is being prepared, appropriately, in the deserts of New Mexico: the Roswell crash. No matter that no ufologist has seen so much as a bent screw, this is the final proof. But no scrap, no bodies, just more aging and fading 'memories'.

The reason for this constant retreat is simple. There is no such thing as the UFO phenomenon. UFO reports are generated by a variety of causes. Most are simply misidentifications and misinterpretations of things we know well. A small number consist of radical misperceptions of the same, some are generated by well-characterised and poorly characterised psychological conditions, some are hoaxes, some possibly poorly understood natural causes, and some, no doubt, are generated by a range of secret technologies. Even if Lakenheath, the Coyne helicopter case and Trans-en-Provence did turn out to have a radically anomalous origin there is no evidence to suggest they were all caused by the same thing.

We should be wary about leaping to folk explanations of anomalies, which are simply projections of our socio-cultural beliefs. If there are major anomalies they will likely be encounters with aspects of the universe for which we have no language or concepts, and therefore do not feature in science fiction and popular occultist literature. ●●●

alienating fancies

the influencing machine fantasy in ufology and the extraterrestrial mythos

Part One

Martin S. Kottmeyer

DOES free will exist? Is Man a meat puppet dangling on strings controlled by higher powers in the universe? Variations on these questions have fascinated thinkers throughout history. Arthur Koestler believed the dramatic motif of Volition against Fate and Puppet on Strings is one of the most powerful archetypes in literature and has appeared in countless forms. (1) Threats to individual or collective freedom arouse very primal human fears and can yield a drama of intense emotions when free will is affirmed. Conversely, when free will is denied, the effect is coldly distancing and allows contemplation of humans as blameless concoctions of organic chemicals stuck in a web of impersonal forces. Because you cannot have heroes without a powerful adversary, paranoia is virtually de rigeur in great literature. (2) In recent times extraterrestrials have joined the pantheon of gods, demons, superior races, secret societies, and power elites which have been pulling the strings.

It would not surprise me if stories of extraterrestrials messing with men's minds pre-date our century, but the earliest instance I've seen is in H.P. Lovecraft's 1928 work "The Call of Cthulhu". It speaks of a race called the Great Old Ones which came from the stars and spoke to men by "molding their dreams". The emergence of Cthulhu from beneath the seas is accompanied by sensitive individuals going mad. The cult which sought to liberate him warned he would bring the earth beneath its sway. (3) A first appearance in Lovecraft's corpus would be appropriate given the mechanistic supernatural perspective that he consciously cultivated of a cosmos totally indifferent to the wants and ultimate welfare of mosquitoes, pterodactyls, fungi, men, trees or other forms of biological energy. As he wrote in a letter a year before this story, "To achieve the essence of real externality, whether of time or space or dimension, one must forget that such things as organic life, good and evil, love and hate, and all such local attributes of a negligible and temporary race called mankind, have any existence at all". It has been said that Lovecraft was the first SF writer to cultivate this stark aesthetic in the service of horror. (4) I'm hesitant to endorse this assertion given its obvious roots in the metaphor of

"deep time" which geologists like Charles Lyell had made popular in the prior century. (5) That Lovecraft's aesthetic led to a proliferation of amoral aliens in later decades is a far safer contention.

H.G. Wells did a couple of works involving the idea of extraterrestrial influences in 1937. *The Camford Visitation* has a vicar use a case of a person troubled by a disembodied voice in a book he is writing called *Extra-Terrestrial Disturbances of Human Mentality*. The case is said to demonstrate "an upthrust of the subconscious through some sort of space-time dislocation". (6) Better known is the occasionally reprinted *Star-begotten: A Biological Fantasia*. It tells the tale of a gentleman discovering a generation of humans who are stranger than prior generations. They possess unaccountable intuitions, mathematical gifts, strange memories and exceptional abilities. He becomes enamoured with the idea that aliens of higher development are manipulating cosmic energies and firing away at human chromosomes with increasing accuracy and effectiveness through the ages. Martians were acting as a sort of interplanetary tutor quite unlike the invaders of *War of the Worlds*. The book affects an ambiguity over whether the narrator was deluding himself with pseudoscientific nonsense or making an actual discovery. At the conclusion, the narrator realises with a start that he himself was one of the "strangers and innovators to our fantastic planet who were crowding into life and making it over anew". (7)

The pulp writer Raymond Z. Gallun utilised the extraterrestrial influence motif in several stories. In "Godson of Almarlu" a machine was devised which was said to now and then influence terrestrial life. "Hotel Cosmos" revolves around a globe which sends out invisible radiations of madness which affects nervous tissue and is used to sabotage a Galactic Conference. "The Magician of Dream Valley" and "The Lotus Engine" develop the idea of aliens able to generate radiations which totally envelop humans in a hallucinated reality. (8)

Arthur C. Clarke used the motif in two widely acclaimed works. In *Childhood's End* (1953) an Overmind "attempted to act directly upon the minds of other

■1. KOESTLER, Arthur, *The Act of Creation*. MacMillan, 1964, 350-57

■2. THORPE, Peter, *Why Literature is Bad for You*, Nelson-Hall, 1980, 82-85

■3. LOVECRAFT, H.P., *The Colour Out of Space*, Jove, 1978

■4. JOSHI, S.T., H.P. Lovecraft: *Four Decades of Criticism*, Ohio University Press, 1980, 105, 110

■5. GOULD, Stephen Jay, *Time's Arrow, Time's Cycle*, Harvard University Press, 1987

■6. SLUSSER, George E. and RABKIN, Eric S. *Aliens - The Anthropology of Science Fiction*, Southern Illinois University Press, 1987, 151

■7. WELLS, H.G., *Star-Begotten*, Leisure, 1970

■8. PIERCE, J.J., *The Best of Raymond Z. Gallun*, Ballantine, 1978

racers and to influence their development". It failed with prior worlds, but Earth's youths are successfully adapted to alien consciousness and the reader experiences them leaving the cradle of the Earth as they evolve towards the Overmind. (9) Even better known, if less understood, is the film *2001 - A Space Odyssey*. The monolith of an alien culture appears before a tribe of apes and invests a new awareness in them which is to set the course of human evolution towards cosmic ambitions. As originally conceived, the alien artifact was to create a hypnotic teaching effect. In the film it was wisely rendered as a mystical moment of enlightenment as the ape which touched the monolith realises the extension of power capable with a tool. A bone becomes a weapon for hunting and murder which inexorably leads to atom bombs and space travel. (10)

Kurt Vonnegut's *Sirens of Titan* is another acclaimed work which was the motif to particularly enjoyable distancing purposes. Humankind was caused to evolve solely to create and transport a tiny repair part for an alien vessel stranded on the Saturnian moon Titan. The aliens, called Tralfamadorians, sent messages to the stranded alien by having humans unconsciously form them. Here is how the process is explained: "Tralfamadorians were able to make certain impulses from the Universal Will to Become echo through the vaulted architecture of the universe with about three times the speed of light. And they were able to focus and modulate these impulses so as to influence creatures far, far away and inspire them to serve Tralfamadorian ends". Civilisations bloomed and crumbled as humans built tremendous structures to relay messages to Titan. "The meaning of Stonehenge in Tralfamadorian, when viewed from above, is: Replacement part being rushed with all possible speed." (11)

Also notable, particularly in light of interviews where the author claims the book is based in part on his actual experiences, is Philip K. Dick's *Valis* (1981). The title refers to an influencing machine from the star system Sirius. The protagonist explains its operation by saying, "Sites of his brain were being selectively stimulated by tight energy beams from far off, perhaps millions of miles away". The narrator is convinced of the insanity of the idea of Valis and is struck by the oddity of "a lunatic discounting his hallucinations in this sophisticated manner; Fat [the protagonist] had intellectually dealed himself out of the game of madness while still enjoying its sights and sounds". The belief that long-range, tight, information-rich beams of energy focused on his head allowed him to recognise his hallucinations as hallucinations. "But...he now had a 'they'". Not much of an improvement, in the opinion of the narrator. (12)

Movies involving the motif of alien influence are common. Dramatically, the best was probably *Five Million Miles to Earth* of the Quatermass series. It is discovered that insectoid Martians once psychically enslaved humanity at the dawn of history. A buried spaceship is discovered and explored by scientists. The Martians inside are dead, but the ship is awakened and starts to take control of humanity once more. *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* is also revered by critics for its rich metaphor of the pod people. Technically this is probably a better example of the Capgras syndrome form of paranoia than influence, but is understandably lumped together with the pandemic of alien possession in Fifties films: *Invaders from Mars*, *It Came from Outer*

Space, *Earth versus the Flying Saucers*, *Kronos*, *Beast With a Million Eyes*, *Enemy from Space*. Control by implant is found in *Invaders from Mars* where the operation to insert it is utilised as a dramatic peril. It recurs in *Battle in Outer Space*, but here the operation is done within a strobing beam of light as the victim is driving a car. After the radio control apparatus makes him a slave of the glorious planet Nehtal he experiences a time loss and discovers a trickle of blood on his forehead. In *Cat Women of the Moon* a beam of light is alone the force of influence. In *Earth versus the Flying Saucers* the beam of light makes the skull go transparent while knowledge is sucked out. A cruder form of mindscan involving a TV monitor can be found in *Invasion of the Star Creatures*. *Zontar - The Thing from Venus* offers an amusing variant by some very unconvincing "injecto-pods", vampire bats with lobster tails, that gain control when they bite you in the neck.

Television can probably consider alien influence a staple item. *Star Trek*, *Lost in Space*, *The Invaders*, *The Outer Limits*, *Space 1999*, *Dr Who* all immediately come to mind with episodes. It has prompted caricature such as a Dick van Dyke Show in which Zombies from



Twylo import walnuts which Rob feels are stealing his imagination. The final episode of *The Monkees* titled "Mijacageo" masterfully invokes the motif for satirical purposes. Humanity becomes controlled through the agency of television sets broadcasting frodis energy directed by a mad scientist, Rip Taylor at his best, and originating in an extraterrestrial bush whose space ship crashed on Earth. By any measure, the idea that aliens influence or control man has shown itself to be a durable and seductive feature of our image of higher powers in the universe. Their intimate concern with the mental life of humans is an unconscious given.

As a dramatic device, the mind-bending alien cannot be faulted. Fiction is always granted licence in the matter of gimmicks helpful in generating conflict and disparities of power or in generating philosophical moods and ambiances. Questions of plausibility would be invalid in such contexts. Yet, it is a question worth asking in other contexts. As we will see later, some people think aliens and their kin can influence the human mind and direct our destiny. Are such things possible?

While we know that science fiction has a way of anticipating future developments in technology - rock-

■9. CLARKE, Arthur C., *Childhood's End*, Ballantine, 1973

■10. AGEL, Jerome (ed.), *The Making of Kubrick's 2001*, Ace 1970

■11. VONNEGUT, Kurt, *The Sirens of Titan*, Delta, 1959

■12. DICK, Philip K., *Valis*, Bantam, 1981. PLATT, Charles, *Dream Makers*, Berkley, 1980, 145-58

etry and nuclear weapons are usual successes cited - its track record is not without problems. Elliot Valenstein notes the idea of the pre-frontal lobotomy was prefigured in a 1924 novel by Eugene Zamiatan titled *We*:

"The latest discovery of our state science is that there is a center for fancy - a miserable little nervous knot in the lower region of the frontal lobe of the brain. A triple treatment of this knot with X-rays will cure you of fancy."

Before hailing this as a marvel, we must, however, recall that pre-frontal lobotomies are no longer done because they represent a tragic delusional fad within the history of medicine. The neurological theory behind the practice was not simply flawed, but wholly wrong. They didn't do what they were advertised to do and ultimately only added misery to already suffering humans. (13) By analogy, prefigurements of alien mastery of human mental mechanisms in SF may only be prefiguring modern delusion and not real alien activities.

Direct material control of the mind by external forces can be placed near the bottom of any list of science fiction notions likely to become reality. It may be more probable than invisibility, teleportation, and

(their science embryonic at present), involved in brain function and there must be a careful orchestration of these chemical reactions for the brain to do its work. Once comprehended one can easily understand why efforts to use electricity to control the mind are about as effective as hitting a person on the head with a hammer. Our hypothetical mind ray would practically have to be able to change water into wine from a distance and possibly into a stable of far more complex molecules. You are asking for miracles. (15)

Electrodes implanted in the brain remove some problems inherent in the ray, but not the fundamental one that the brain is more gland than computer. Wilder Penfield's work with electrodes that yielded some reactions is sometimes cited by mind controller wanna-bes as evidence that there is a future in brain stimulation. Penfield himself, however, regarded his work as eliminating the possibility of mind control. Pleasant sensations and some modifications of emotional states were elicited in a few instances. Compelled behaviour, however, was totally absent. The brain proved to be remarkably plastic biological entity with behaviours regulated through many sites. For all practical purposes, the human will remains autonomous. (16)

The dream of controlling human thought and action with less fabulous technology has been a notoriously hit-and-miss occupation. Threats and torture, crude as they are, worked well enough for most social engineers in the past, though the downside risks of revenge, intransigence, and low productivity must be factored in. Social persuasion techniques like advertising do not compel buying behaviour, but rather try to generate attention to product existence followed by the evocation of pleasurable mental associations to make purchase of the product a rewarding experience. Drugs can elicit rewarding sensations of power, ecstasy, excitement and tranquillity which seemingly provoke compulsive behaviour in the form of more drug-taking, but do not force one to do the will of others in an absolute sense. You can find other drug sources and the option of quitting is usually chosen at some point. Hypnosis, as the alternative term indicates, is more a case of suggestion than a bending of wills. Even the bugaboo of brainwashing has on critical analysis showed itself to be less imposing than the myth indicates. Humans do pretty much as they darn well please. (17)

These considerations force a high measure of scepticism towards any claim that human minds are being manipulated by mind rays or other advanced technology wielded by extraterrestrials or indeed any mythic power. The alternative that humans, inspired by the literature, media, and cultural myths surrounding them, can convince themselves that such fantasies are reality, has to be given a higher order of probability. There are several UFO cases involving people claiming such things.

In May 1945, Ray Palmer's magazine *Amazing Stories* published a story "I remember Lemuria" by Richard Shaver. Though appearing in a magazine for science fiction, Shaver and Palmer professed it recounted true occurrences. That story and others serialised from it started a controversy which became known as the Great Shaver Mystery. The tales built up a cosmology steeped in cult conspiracy notions, harkenings to ancient wisdom, and lost continents. Among the elements of the cosmology was something called the "dero". In Shaver's words, the dero referred

■ 13. VALENSTEIN, Elliot S., *Great and Desperate Cures: The Rise and Decline of Psychosurgery and Other Radical Treatments for Mental Illness*, Basic Books, 1986, 121

■ 14. VALENSTEIN, Elliot, *Brain Control: A Critical Examination of Brain Stimulation and Psychosurgery*, John Wiley, 1975

■ 15. BERGLAND, Richard, *The Fabric of Mind: A Radical New Understanding of the Brain and How it Works*, Viking, 1985

■ 16. LEWIS, Jefferson, *Something Hidden: A Biography of Wilder Penfield*, Doubleday, 1981

■ 17. BROMLEY, David G. and SHUPE, Anson D., *Strange Gods: The Great American Cult Scare*, Beacon, 1981. VALENSTEIN, op. cit., 72

One must forget that good and evil, love and hate and all such local attributes of a negligible and temporary race called mankind have any existence at all

force barriers, but faster-than-light travel, time travel, and utopia probably have better odds and they seem overly paradoxical to give them much credence. Many factors contribute to such an assessment. How does one generate minute but precise potentials of energy across microscopic distances at specific points within a mass of biological tissue possessing changing electrical potentials in overlying areas? To do this without electrodes to insulate and guide the energy to the points desired would require a fabulous degree of finesse. Particle streams would be defocused by varying tissue densities. What prevents interactive effects in the tissue above the sites of manipulation? Worse, brains do not map precisely one to another. Knowing how to control one mind does not immediately gain you the ability to control a different one. (14)

Another problem underlying external modes of influence is that the brain, contrary to popular metaphor, is not like a computer with switches that can be flipped or wires that can be inductively given an electrical charge. Electricity is probably only a superficial feature of brain activity overlying systems of molecular interactions which are the primary modifiers of consciousness. There are hundreds of hormones, maybe even thousands

■18. SHAVER, Richard S., "Teros and Deros", *Caveat Emptor*, #8 (Summer 1973), 15.
TORONTO, Richard S., "Do Brain-damaged Robots Rule the Earth?", *Official UFO*, 2, #6 (October 1977), 32-35, 56-59, 64.
DEL REY, Lester, *The World of Science Fiction*, Ballantine, 1979, 117-18.
KEEL, John, "The Man Who Invented Flying Saucers", *Fortean Times*, #41 (Winter 1983), 52-57.
WILLIS, Walt, "Soiree with the Fringe on Top", *Warhoon*, #28, 182-84.
SHEAFFER, Robert, *The UFO Verdict*, Prometheus, 1981, 150

■19. MENDER, Howard, *From Outer Space*, Pyramid, 1967, 62, 137

■20. STANFORD, Rex and Ray, *Look Up*, authors, 1958, 28-30

■21. VALLEE, Jacques, *Messengers of Deception*, And/Or, 1979, 136.
KEEL, John, *Mothman Prophecies*, Signet, 1976, 157-59

■22. INTCAT #981, *Magonia*, #4

■23. STRINGFIELD, Leonard, *Situation Red*, Fawcett Crest, 1977, 65-66

■24. MACER-STORY, Eugenia, *Congratulations: The UFO Reality*, Crescent, 1978, 4-7

■25. LORENZEN, Coral and Jim, *Abducted*, Berkeley-Medallion, 1977, 153

■26. CLARK, Jerome, "Startling New Evidence in the Pascagoula and Adamski Abductions", *UFO Report*, August 1978, 78

■27. LORENZEN, op. cit., 49

■28. STEVENS, Wendelle C. and HERRMANN, William, *UFO Contact from the Reticulum*, Wendelle Stevens, 1981

■29. LORENZEN, op. cit., 63

■30. GORDON, James S., "The UFO Experience", *Atlantic*, August 1991, 92.
KOTTMAYER, Martin, "The Alien Booger Menace", *The REAL News*, 1, #6 (July 1993), 1,

to a "concept of electronic surveillance, through mind-contacting and mind-influencing machinery". He believed the mind was capable of inducing influences "magnetically from the destructive forces of nature" and that opened up the possibility of a world-wide "telemach" which would be like a radio telephone into the mind. With this device, degenerate beings infiltrating old service chambers of a previous civilisation were trying to rule men's minds. Among the signs demonstrating someone was being affected by dero was a person's tendency to talk contradictions and clichés. The dero speeds up the thoughts of emperors and czars to impel the world towards destruction. Shaver's views struck a chord with many readers. Hard-core science fiction fans viewed the Shaver Mystery with disdain and probably helped contribute to the science fiction community's distrust of the flying saucer mystery which Palmer also promoted and linked it with. (18)

Mind control motifs turn up sporadically among the early contactees. Howard Menger was among the most prominent examples. His aliens were distributing devices over the landscape which were designed to open brains up to the possibility of space travel. On the darker side, another alien group called The Conspiracy possessed the capability of advanced brain therapy. The aliens were locked in ceaseless battle for men's souls. (19)

The Stanfords, whose writings have roots in George Hunt Williamson's contactee/ufological speculations, experienced a fantastic sparkling beam projected from a hovering UFO which raised their consciousness above earth man's delusions. This illumination swept them into a whirlpool of ever expanding consciousness till it reached a numinous state of KNOWINGNESS. It was felt to possess a very high resonant frequency or vibration. It was said to be more visible with the third eye than with the physical eye. (20)

Eugenia Siragusa, who gained some fame as a European contactee, similarly has reported an encounter in which a beam of light created a "redimension" ted to a large machine which had tapes which transmitted ideas into his brain. After three hours he was transported back to where he was before. He learned 18 days had actually passed. It was claimed the student developed psychic powers, an improved memory, and a sense of mission after the encounter. (22)

In May 1975 Cuck Doyle encountered a manta-shaped UFO that was probing the area with a green laser-like beam. The beam hit him and he felt paralysed. Strange thoughts came into his mind like mathematical equations that made no sense, the omega symbol, a landscape with a red ocean below a green sky and blue ground underfoot, and sensations of floating in space with stars of many colours. When the beam went out, he fell on his face. (23)

Eugenia Macer-Storey, in her charming autobiography about the craziness of her life after becoming a UFO buff, reported an altered mental state following a telepathic contact with a ball of light. She feels it made her a different person not fully in control of her personal mind set. (24)

Abductees have claimed a notable variety of alien influence episodes. Patty Price claimed aliens hooked wires to her head and her thoughts, impressions and emotions were taken and recorded. (25) Charles Hickson, of the Pascagoula classic has complained, "They took my mind". He couldn't remember things or think straight. He was clearly distressed. (26) Charles Moody was told

by aliens he had been "absorbed". The Lorenzens, who investigated, took this to mean information was extracted from his mind. Trekkies familiar with "Return of the Archons" will take a slightly different meaning. (27) Aliens in the William Herrmann case utilise "inoculation" bars and chambers to enhance mental abilities. (28)

One of the wildest variations was provided by the Sandra Larson case wherein aliens physically removed her brain from her body. She asserts that when they placed it back they reconnected it differently and she lost control of her speech. Trekkies may think this a rewrite of the comic episode "Spock's Brain", but that is probably just their imagination. She believes her aliens can press a button and know whatever she is thinking wherever she happens to be. (29)

Recent years have seen a proliferation of claims about implants inserted into humans by aliens. Particularly remarkable is one set of claims involving implants shoved up abductees' noses - the notorious alien booger menace. The bizarre path of insertion, bizarre because of the septic nature of the sinus cavities, marks the experiences as indisputably fantasy. James Gordon notes that while talk of implants would almost certainly seem

Everywhere Lilly found evidence of 'the control of human society by these networks of extraterrestrial communication'

to point to paranoia, the claimants seem to recognise how crazy it seems and are less sure of what it means than most paranoids. In the case of the alien booger menace what is going on is a shared imaginary social world. The implants are a sign of involvement and sympathetic corroboration. It started with a curious detail in the 1976 Sandy Larson case. In addition to the brain removal performed by the space mummy, the alien operation included having her nose scraped with something like a knife or cotton swab placed inside. The investigators noted that prior to her UFO sighting, Larson had undergone a similar operation for a sinus condition. It was painful and she was scheduled for additional treatment. Betty Andreasson, who was well versed in UFO thought, reported a similar alien nose operation with the swab turned into an implant on a rod. She included drawings of it which gave it a visual elaboration and concreteness which helped it to return in still later cases like those of Meagan Elliot, Virginia Horton, Kathie Davis, Casey Turner, and so on. (30)

Excluding the booger menace, these people are presenting themes familiar to most students of abnormal psychology. Malcolm Bower's study of the nature of emerging psychosis notes that fragmentation of self-

experience, the loss of the sense of self, is common. The very first case he speaks of involves a gentleman who believed his thoughts were stolen or removed. "Thought-stealing", we have already seen, is repeatedly found in abductee accounts. The sense of mission which follows some UFO contacts also frequently accompanies the onset of psychosis. Ideas of reference - a term given to notions that others are responsible for the thoughts one is thinking - is the most common delusion shared by schizophrenics. Some diagnosticians speak of it as a "first-rank" symptom of schizophrenia. (31)

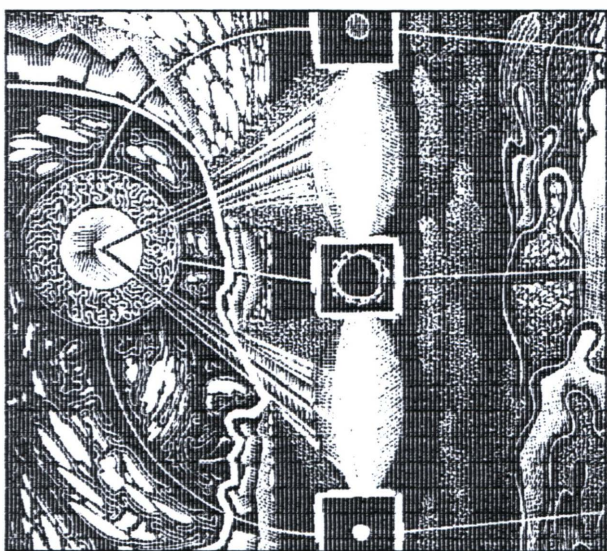
In trying to explain how his erstwhile persecutors inject thoughts into his mind, the schizophrenic frequently develops a belief in the existence of influencing machines. Viktor Tausk presented a description of this phenomenon of belief in influencing machines among schizophrenics back in 1918. Tausk found the belief appeared to evolve from an originating sensation of inner change accompanied by a sense of estrangement. The need some people have for causality yields belief in a persecutor. As the delusion develops over time it focuses first on one person and then to a circle of conspirators. The mechanism used by the persecutor at

with stroboscopes plagued the victim. They would probe minds, feed in thoughts, and take out information. They were a gabby lot and a whole vocabulary to cover aspects of their jobs. Their motive was purportedly one of sporting. He who gained the greatest influence over something was the winner. (33)

The novel autobiography of the scientist John C. Lilly presents another illustration of the marvellous nature of influencing machine fantasies. Lilly helped to advance brain electrode technology in a desire to help ferret out the brain/mind duality problem. He dreamed of the possibility of lacing the brain with electrodes and seeing if playing back its own impulses would yield a difference in experience. When the secret intelligence possibilities of mind control created an ethical conflict in him, he abandoned his work for dolphin and isolation tank research. In time he became involved in taking the drug ketamine. He experienced a startling hallucination about the comet Kohoutek, then passing near the earth, wherein it spoke to Lilly and offered a demonstration of "power over the solid-state control systems upon the earth" by shutting down Los Angeles Airport. Lilly reports the demonstration was successful. As the delusion developed over the ensuing months, Lilly lived within a cosmology where computerisation would take over the earth and remove its corrosive air and water. Solid-state civilisations roamed the galaxy and they tried to convince Lilly to develop machines to "take care of" man. Everywhere Lilly began to find evidence of "the control of human society by these networks of extraterrestrial communication".

As Lilly became seduced by ketamine's effects, he shot up every hour and became convinced of solid-state intervention in human affairs to the extent that he tried to contact the President to warn the government. Lilly came to believe Elliot Richardson was being controlled by these alien forces, then the television networks as well. Lilly felt he himself was being controlled by these solid-state entities to see messages in things like a film on the Kennedy assassination. Use of the drug led Lilly to two brushes with death. Once he nearly drowned after passing out in a pool of water. As he was whisked to a hospital he believed himself to be in the year 3001. The second time, he punctured a lung in a biking accident. He swore off the drug. Back to dolphins for Lilly. He hedged on admitting the unreality of the experiences while on ketamine, but it is a model of psychosis from the precipitating shame of helping spies, the withdrawal from society, estrangement and encroaching death, the conspiratorial pseudo-community relating real to fictional entities, overinterpretations of events as encoding messages to oneself, manic thought, to of course the motif of the influencing machine. It serves here, as it usually does in paranoia, the function of disowning or alienating (in the archaic sense of the term) his unwanted hallucinations and those aspects of modern technocratic civilisation he senses are running out of our control. (34)

It should be emphasised that influencing machine fantasies and ideas of reference are defensive strategies to retain some measure of self-esteem against crazy thoughts and shameful impulses and actions. The individual does not want to call himself crazy and blames others for the unwanted situation he is in. Though it is a primary sign of schizophrenia because



first is grasped only vaguely but, in time, buttons, levers and cranks become part of the picture. It is felt the machine manipulates magnetic or electrical forces or air currents, or uses telepathy or some mysterious radiations beyond the patient's knowledge of physics. In identifying their persecutors, schizophrenics commonly point to ex-lovers, employers and physicians. However, the persecutors are also picked from the culture around them - the CIA, Einstein, movie characters, computers and, of course, extraterrestrials. (32)

These fantasies can become quite elaborate. Two recently available autobiographies of schizophrenics can be pointed to in illustration. In one, a girl began fantasising about an electronic machine capable of blowing up the earth and which would rob all men of their brains, thus creating robots obedient to her will. She called it the System. As her delusions progressed she discovered the System had become "a vast world-like entity encompassing all men". Subsequently it turned on her and forced her into self-destructive acts like burning her own hand and refusing food. At the end, the System was involved in saying silly and innocuous things and finally just sunk "beyond thought" with the loss of the delusion. In the second, a corps of Operators armed

■31. BOWERS, Malcolm B. *Retreat from Sanity: The Structure of Emerging Psychosis*, Human Sciences, 1974.
TORREY, E. Fuller, *Surviving Schizophrenia: A Family Manual*, Harper Colophon, 1983, 46-48

■32. TAUSK, Viktor, "On the Origin of the Influencing Machine in Schizophrenia", *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 2 (1953), 519-56

■33. SECHEHAYE, Marguerite, *Autobiography of a Schizophrenic Girl*, Signet, 1968. ■BRIEN, Barbara, *Operators and Things: The Inner Life of a Schizophrenic*, Signet, 1976

■34. LILLY, John C., *The Scientists: A Novel Autobiography*, Lippincott, 1978

because it is an indicator that the mind is misbehaving and flooding the consciousness with primitive thoughts, loose associations, or blocking mechanisms, it is also indicative of a positive prognosis. The mind is at least defending itself and not passively giving in. It is in this sense equally a sign of normality. It is a defence potentially available for most people and can be called upon for less challenging mental dilemmas than schizophrenic episodes. As we saw up front, fiction writers call them up frequently for dramaturgical purposes. They have license to use fantasy mechanisms and retain the presumption of normality. Some UFO cases earlier probably involved psychotic episodes (some organic, some reactive in origin) and some are just stories. Either way, the presence of these motifs justifies the presumption of unreality unless VERY extraordinary proof is marshalled against its likely impossibility.

Out of control

In the course of paranoid psychoses, influencing machine fantasies and ideas of reference generally appear after the hypochondriacal phase and the beginning of the reintegration of the ego. Their appearance defines what workers call the projection phase. The term unfortunately invites confusion with everyday forms of psychological projection wherein one's impulses are mirrored onto someone else. Though this is undeniably part of what is seen in this phase, the salient features are more concerned with the disowning of unwanted mental content and blame being shifted onto an external agent or locus of control. Externality might be a better term, but it also has milder everyday counterparts.

We have demonstrated elsewhere that the history of ufology exhibits features reminiscent of the way paranoia changes over time. Delusions of observation, world destruction fantasies, and hypochondriacal fears cluster in the early years. In what follows we will chronicle the appearance of influencing machine fantasies in the writing of ufologists. If you've been paying attention you already know when they clustered, but this exercise in nostalgia has value beyond proving something obvious for those for whom this isn't obvious. Understanding why ufologists think in these ways allows one a deeper appreciation of the nature of the UFO mythos.

Nearly every significant speculation in ufological thought seems to be prefigured somewhere in Charles Fort's writings and there is no exception in the matter of influencing machine fantasies. Sometime before writing *The Book of the Damned* he wrote a work titled *X* which was organised on the idea that our civilisation was controlled by certain rays emanating from Mars. The process was akin to the way images on photographic film are controlled by light rays. To the X, earth is a sensitive photographic plate and all of our reality is an artistic medium. Theodore Dreiser saw it and thought it an amazing and new idea. Publishers rejected it and Fort later destroyed it. (35) Fort probably did not totally abandon the notion, since a decade later in a letter to the *New York Times* in 1926 he opined that "for ages Martians may have been in communication with this earth and have, in some occult way, been in control of its inhabitants". (36) A subtler variant passingly mentioned in his books was that aliens communicated with esoteric cults which sought to direct humanity. In this respect and many others, Fort is the veritable Lovecraft and H.G. Wells of ufology.

The first generation of ufologists following the

Wave of 1947 was dominated by ideas of reconnaissance and eventual material contact. None of what could be termed the major authors held notions about alien influence: Keyhoe, Heard, Scully, Wilkins, Jessup, Girvan, Ruppelt, Michel, Stringfield, and Barker. Some lesser figures of course had fantasies of influence as we already saw in connection with the contactees. One figure is a notable standout and that is George Hunt Williamson. He was one of the first contactees. Whether one can term him a ufologist is debatable, but I include him in this section because there is a philosophical and mythological elaboration in his thinking that goes beyond the raw claim of contact.

The Saucers Speak was Williamson's first effort. It relates alien communications to Williamson and his group by means of radiotelegraphy, ouija boards, and automatic writing. It would be difficult to find a more bizarre collection of misinformation about the Solar System. The sun is cool. Pluto is not. All the planets are inhabitable. The motif of influence emerges in an episode of sublime inscrutability. Williamson's group was "impressed" to go to see a Bugs Bunny cartoon at the movies since it held the date the aliens planned to



appear in person. They all find this a rather foolish way to go about things and they get lost driving around on the revealed date looking for the contact site. We note in their defence that while aliens claimed they could turn brains into receivers, they warned, "Too much mind-probing will fuse mind". (37)

Williamson greatly expanded the scope of his tale with his next work *Other Tongues - Other Flesh*. The origin of man is traced to a migration of spirit from the star-sun Sirius which fuses with the native apes of earth. Extraterrestrial influence nowadays comes in two types. One comes from the Orion nebula and takes over weak-bodied earth people making them agents subservient to their will. They are used as instruments to introduce people to other people and to ask leading questions at lectures. These agents tend to run amuck and upset the plans of other space intelligences. Benevolent space people regard these materialistic types as pirates of creation or universal parasites. They are identified by the strange, far-away glassy look in their eyes and by muscle spasms or throbbings in the neck. Heavy drinkers were also said to be at risk of submitting to telepathic Orion control.

The other influence is a general background of

■35. KNIGHT, Damon, *Charles Fort: Prophet of the Unexplained*, Doubleday, 1970, 55-61

■36. FORT, Charles, "Have Martians Visited Us?", *New York Times*, 5 September 1926, section 7, p. 14

■37. WILLIAMSON, George Hunt, *The Saucers Speak: A Documentary Report of Interstellar Communication by Radiotelegraphy*, Neville Spearman, 1967

cosmic radiation bearing Universal Knowledge. Williamson variously refers to it as a "music of the spheres", a Great Cosmic Intelligence permeating space, or a universal influx from outer space. Magnetic anomalies on earth associated with fault lines and volcanoes act as amplifiers of this music. Great civilisations spring up over these anomalies and yield a refinement in the arts and living conditions. Williamson adds that the entire solar system is entering a new possibility area of the universe in which everything will change for the better in all fields of life from economics, politics, eating habits to religion and science. This is possible because he believes the brain acts as a radio set for this radiation. Everything man thinks, says, does and creates is magnetism and magnetism is a Universal "I AM". This phrase may indicate roots in Guy Ballard's doctrine of the I AM which in turn is rooted in Theosophy's doctrine that man is a spiritual being who is an emanation of the Universal Spirit, rather like a light beam is an emanation of the sun. Beneath man's passions and reasonings can be found pure being, the pure "I". (38)

Williamson co-authored a third book with John McCoy entitled *UFOs Confidential!* It had far fewer am-

The sixties, despite a voluminous literature, saw at best two or three figures advancing alien mind-control notions. John Cleary-Baker, during a lecture in April 1966, expressed a belief that flying saucers were involved in tampering with people's brains, perhaps by a medical operation which would cause them to act in accord with alien suggestions. He asserted he could recognise people possessed by an alien spirit who were occupying positions in society. John Michell did not particularly accept Cleary-Baker's idea, but noted flying saucer apparitions were "ideally calculated to disturb the order of our thoughts, to put us in a state of mental anarchy which must precede the start of a new phase of our history". He reviewed many tales from mythology which indicated to him the spark of civilisation was ignited by gods borne in sky vehicles, though this wasn't consistently a premeditated act. Michell viewed the renewed interest in extraterrestrials as a return to an older orthodoxy represented by the religious observances of antiquity. "The possibility that our whole development has been influenced by extraterrestrial forces, with which we may again have to reckon some time in the future, is still hardly considered." Michell would prove himself remarkably prophetic with that little sentence. (41) In the decade that followed, most ufologists would reckon with that possibility.

The Lorenzens first advance alien mind control notions in *UFOs over the Americas* (1968). Confronted with indications of hallucinations in the Peruvian case of CAV, they speculate that the UFO occupants projected thoughts designed to influence him to describe images and activities he thinks he saw, but what he actually saw is not remembered at the conscious level. In a different vein, they suggest the beeping sounds in the Hill case suggest the presence of a mechanical device by which ufonauts lure and control humans through magnetic fields or hypnotic sounds. Though granting the notion seems like rank science fiction they grant it plausibility on the grounds that the brain is "nothing more or less than a very complex computer". The error is telling, even if commonplace. (42)

The situation changes radically in the seventies. The control motif appears frequently, is mentioned by most major figures, and dominates the theoretical scene as the core concept in several works.

In pure ambition of vision, ufologists will find it very hard to ever top the writings of John Keel. Reservations cloud acceptance of the raw material he builds from, but no one need qualify an appreciation of the effort of construction. Drawing on an impressive range of sources, Keel sketches a dark, feathery chiaroscuro of mysterious lights and shadowy patterns of deceptions which plays on primal fears about human powerlessness and naivety. Keel abandoned the ETH in 1967 when psychic phenomena emerged in his thinking as a full facet of the UFO problem. *Operation Trojan Horse* (1970) is his research effort stimulated by this change in perspective. Keel adopts the premise that humans have crude biological crystal sets in their heads which unconsciously receive sophisticated signals of an electromagnetic nature and bearing an omnipotent intelligence which has great flexibility of form. They advance beliefs in various frameworks of thought. Prior ages received Trojan Horses in the shapes of angels, fairies, spirits, phantom armies, mystery inventors and their airships, and ghost

■38. WILLIAMSON, George Hunt, *Other Tongues - Other Flesh*, Neville Spearman, 1965. DE CAMP, L. Sprague, *The Ragged Edge of Science*, Owlswick, 1980, 106-108. "Theosophy" in HASTINGS, James (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. 12, Charles Scribners, 304-15

■39. WILLIAMSON, George Hunt and MCCOY, *UFOs Confidential*, authors, 1958

■40. DAVIDSON, Leon, "Why I Believe in Adamski", *Flying Saucers*, February 1954

■41. MICHELL, John, *Flying Saucer Vision*, Abacus, 1977, 24, 64-65, 178

■42. LORENZEN, Jim and Coral, *UFOs Over the Americas*, Signet, 1968, 148, 206-207

"The saucer apparition is ideally calculated to disturb the order of our thoughts, to put us in a state of mental anarchy which must precede the start of a new phase of our history"

bitions than the previous book. Artificial chemicals in our food supply are said to be controlling man's emotional nature. McCoy reveals that a ringing in the ears indicates space people are beaming instructions into the subconscious mind. He also advocates we seek love and not lustful sex. "No master of darkness can project LOVE frequency", he proclaims. (39) I'm tempted to term such thoughts grandly naive were it not for the fact that there is a mythic quality to the total portrait. There are too many errors and idiosyncrasies not to dismiss it all as a crank's cosmology, yet in the hands of a more disciplined SF author, *Other Tongues - Other Flesh* could be rewritten into a nice work of imagination.

One other lesser figure is known to me as displaying a control motif. Dr Leon Davidson graced the pages of *Flying Saucers* magazine with his notions about how the CIA was hoaxing parts of the UFO phenomenon. He explained how George Adamski wasn't taken into outer space by Venusians, but was escorted to Camp Irwin, California where agents and operatives faked his contact using movie technology and drugs. Davidson was a chemical engineer with atomic energy projects through the forties and fifties, including Los Alamos and Oak Ridge. (40)

rockets. States of mystical illumination and possession accompany receipt of these signals and forward belief in occult happenings. Keel also advances the idea that there are window areas around which UFO sightings congregate - areas typified by a "magnetic fault". The similarities to Williamson are evident, but so are the differences. The cruder physics errors are gone and an impressive body of research into occult history and learned observations about the implausibilities inherent in existing ranges of UFO experience make this a far meatier meal to chew on. (43)

Our Haunted Planet (1971) is a frivolous interlude which reads like someone tossed a couple of dozen works of Fortean in a blender. Mixing lost civilisations, occult conspiracies, Velikovsky, disappearances, UFO contacts and such we get a speculative history of ultraterrestrials back to the caveman. It retains the view that ultraterrestrials involve hallucinogenic mind trips guided by a force which manipulates the electrical circuits of the brain. (44)

The Mothman Prophecies (1975) is ufology's most intensely driven narrative. Its ambience has the mechanistic supernatural evocations of Lovecraft's finest horror. We learn there is a fearful gamesmanship to the intelligence which scripts the UFO drama. Once a belief of any sort arises, this cosmic mechanism supports and escalates it. The believer is played for the fool when the higher expectations for salvation are crushed. The force of events manifests a tangible paranoia. Keel captures this sense of malevolent forces moving the flow of events very convincingly. Psychics and sensitives throughout the centuries parrot monotonously similar phrases like a skipping phonograph needle. Beams of light reprogram people to become Belief robots like Saul/Paul at the dawn of Christianity. He adopts the credo of the Enlightenment: "Belief is the enemy." (45)

The Eighth Tower (1975) is the culmination of Keel's vision. Religious visions are more fully incorporated into the tapestry of reprogramming games. Love is twisted into a negative force by robotic Jesus freaks and the fanatics of all faiths. Their ruthless, destructive acts reveal the controlling intelligence as emotionally unstrung and stupid. It distorts reality in whimsical, crazy ways such as to suggest "God may be a crackpot". (46) He expands the control motif around a cosmological construct called the superspectrum. This is a hypothetical spectrum of energies which purportedly is extra-dimensional and outside the normal range of the electromagnetic spectrum. It directs unaccountable coincidences into human lives and subtly influences the direction of history. It tried to seduce him in the directions of his research. Keel even confessed an ability to control other people's minds on a modest scale. In a whimsical moment he speculates that all these UFO and bigfoot apparitions are the senile end products of a dying supercomputer that once ran the world in deepity. Now it idles away the time tormenting people with its madness. (47)

In a feverish finale Keel inverts his theoretical edifice. The reprogramming energies come through a black hole from another time. The superspectral God becomes a switchboard and the only real reality. We are the delusion, it is the everything of reality. While this fastforward into the cosmic identity stage of paranoia was perhaps obligatory, it is a letdown from the earlier and wiser panegyrics against unreflective belief. I feared Keel's reprogram button had been flipped. (48) ●●●

AT A VERY early stage in the investigation of UFO reports it became generally accepted that if a significant number of verified reports remained unexplained after exhaustive investigation then these UFOs must be interplanetary spacecraft. Some people argued that there were no really good cases and that the whole business was just a manifestation of human irrationality and gullibility. Students of the subject thus became divided into believers and sceptics. This made for lively debate, but it did little to advance scientific research on rare or unexplained phenomena.

The reason for this state of affairs lies in the use of the extraterrestrial hypothesis (ETH) by UFO enthusiasts as a blanket explanation for all unsolved UFO cases. The problem with the ETH is not that it is absurd. It is, indeed, perfectly rational. Many scientists have devoted a great deal of effort to setting up radio equipment and monitoring the output to see if they can detect signals from other civilisations which may or may not exist elsewhere in the galaxy. Why, many ufologists might ask, do they not simply study the best UFO reports, then they might learn something about the ETs?

The reason is that if they discovered signals which they could demonstrate were coming from a source umpteen light years away and that these signals were artificial, then that would be positive proof of extraterrestrial intelligence. This reasoning does not apply to UFOs, as no one sees where they go to or where they come from. The ETH is not a scientific theory, as applied to UFOs, because it can account for *all* reports for which conventional explanations are not easily found. A theory which so easily explains everything explains nothing. If you say that such and such a UFO was an alien spacecraft then you don't have to bother investigating any further.

It is rather like a man who watches a conjuring act. He can't imagine how the effects are achieved, so he comes to the conclusion that the conjuror has amazing paranormal powers. This saves him the effort of studying the literature on magic to discover how the tricks are actually performed.

It is this sort of attitude that has resulted in the neglect of some interesting reports. The question which arises is: Are there any good UFO reports for which a convincing physical or psychological explanation has not been found? Now there are some really stunning reports but few of them can stand up to critical examination. What we need are reports with the following characteristics, and I won't spell out the reasons for them because they should be fairly obvious:

●1) Independent witnesses separated from one another; ●2) Reports made with all relevant details to a responsible person or organisation shortly after the event; ●3) No significant internal inconsistencies in the reports; ●4) No obvious explanation of the phenomena reported.

I will start by looking at three reports from the literature. I have chosen them because they are very different from one another and because one of them, which seems at first an excellent and baffling report, unravels into a string of misidentifications. 

■43. KEEL, John, *Why UFOs?*, Manor, 1976

■44. KEEL, John, *Our Haunted Planet*, Fawcett, 1971, 182

■45. KEEL, John, *The Mothman Prophecies*, Signet, 1976

■46. KEEL, John, *The Eighth Tower*, Signet, 1977

■47. *Ibid.*, 188

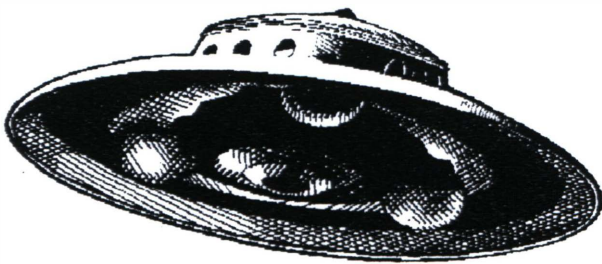
■48. *Ibid.*, 202

Has, as one critic recently put it, the psycho-social approach reduced ufology to a form of literary criticism? Are many ufologists neglecting hard evidence of a physical phenomenon - and does that phenomenon have to imply the Extraterrestrial Hypothesis.

JOHN HARNEY

kicks off a Magonia 'Back to Basics' campaign, as he sets out

in search of the REAL UFOs



St. Louis, Missouri, 14 July 1954

The incident occurred in the driveway and car park of the Propulsion Laboratory, McDonnell Aircraft Corporation, St. Louis. An object described as an irregular rectangle, 18 x 18 x 8 inches, pale milky white, and having the consistency of cotton candy or spun glass was seen. It approached from the east, descending from 30 feet to the ground. It stopped on the ground, then rose to 4 feet, made a right-angle turn to the north, advanced about 75 feet to an 8-foot cyclone fence, rose over it and eventually disappeared into the overcast. It was in view for about 3-5 minutes. It travelled at a speed of 3-8 mph. Five observers reported it, and it is believed that there were about 10 witnesses altogether. The farthest witness was about 200 feet away, but one witness followed it at a distance of only 5 feet. The wind at the time was south-east, about 2-6 mph.

The Blue Book explanation was "debris in wind". Dr J Allen Hynek rejected this explanation in view of the very light wind. (1) If the incident really happened as described it is very difficult to explain. If the object were a piece of lightweight packing material, such a light breeze might have been able to move it along the ground, but hardly seems enough to waft it into the clouds. As the sky was overcast there would have been no thermals which could send small objects soaring upwards. The Blue Book conclusion certainly seems to be at odds with the reported details of this case.

Gatchellville, Pennsylvania, 8 March 1977

Eleven witnesses in six separate groups saw a red ball of fire which was "like a second moon in the sky" at 7.30 pm. It moved against the wind in a left-to-right wobbling motion for about 2-5 minutes, a few hundred feet above the ground. It was then seen to drop down towards the lawn of a house. A few minutes later someone called the fire department to deal with a grass fire, but when they arrived it had already gone out. Investigators found a burned patch of grass 100 x 30 feet with a hole of 1 foot diameter 132 feet to the south-east. It seems that the lawn grass itself did not support combustion (presumably too moist). Tests failed to show any traces of any combustible substances. The soil was said to have been burned black to a depth of 3 inches, as if it had been subjected to intense heat. Within the burned patch were three holes, 1 inch in diameter and nearly 3 inches deep forming a triangle 54 ø 52 ø 72 inches. The field investigator (from the Center for UFO Studies) did not reach the site until several days had passed, so these holes could have been made by some mischievous person after the event. (2)

The obvious explanation which suggests itself is ball lightning but this is itself a phenomenon which is still a mystery, as no one has been able to develop a coherent theory as to how the energy of a lightning ball could be contained. (There are still some sceptics who refuse to accept the reality of ball lightning.) From the description of this incident it seems that a very large amount of energy was released when the object hit the lawn. Ball lightning is a very complex phenomenon, and there are apparently a number of distinct varieties of it. There is no doubt a more detailed account of this case available, but my reference does not give any details of the weather at the time of the incident.

1 HYNEK, J. Allen,
The Hynek UFO Report, London,
Sphere Books, 1978,
149-151

2 HENDRY, Allan,
The UFO Handbook,
London, Sphere
Books, 1980, 120-121



Rapid City, South Dakota, 12 August 1953

Shortly after dark, the Air Defense Command radar station at Ellsworth Air Force Base, just east of Rapid City, received a call from the local Ground Observer Corps Filter Center. A woman observer at Black Hawk, about 10 miles west of Ellsworth had reported an extremely bright light low on the horizon to the north-east. The radar scanner was turned to cover this part of the sky and a well-defined, bright target was seen in the direction in which the light had been reported. The height-finding radar was then turned on the object and it was found to be at 16,000 feet.

The controller arranged to be put through to the GOC observer and together they compared notes on the object. The observer noticed that it was starting to move towards Rapid City. This was confirmed by radar. The controller sent two men outside to look and they saw the object. It made a wide sweep around Rapid City and then returned to its original position.

The controller then called on the pilot of an F-84 to intercept it. The UFO began to move when the pilot got within about 3 miles of it. The pilot chased it about 120 miles north, then had to turn back because he did not have enough fuel. He had gone beyond the range of the radar, but his blip reappeared a few minutes later, followed at a distance of about 15 miles by the UFO. Another pilot was sent up to intercept it and the same thing happened; this time the UFO went north-east.

When the object went off the radar scope it was heading towards Fargo, North Dakota, so the controller called the Fargo Filter Center. A short time later they called back to say they had reports of a fast-moving bright light.

The above account is a condensed version of the report given by Ruppelt. (3). However, Menzel explained the radar contacts as false images caused by a temperature inversion, and the visual sightings as the star Capella. (4) He had little but Ruppelt's summary to go on, and his explanation was too simple, as we can see from the Condon report. (5) Hynek thought that the stars Capella, Arcturus and Betelgeuse, the planet Jupiter, and at least one meteor were involved in the visual sightings. The investigators agreed with Menzel's theory about the radar echoes. The descriptions of the sightings given in the Condon report give a very different impression from that given by Ruppelt's account.

Discussion

I have chosen these reports in an attempt to demonstrate that not all serious UFO reports obviously point to the ETH as an explanation, even when they remain unexplained and that the only thing that most UFO reports have in common is a belief by the witnesses in the ETH or a desire, often subconscious, to believe in it.

A factor which might tend to weaken the first case is that the witnesses delayed for some time before making an official report. It thus seems likely that they would have compared notes in order to present mutually

consistent accounts. It is also likely that the witnesses were all well known to one another, as they worked at the same place. It might be argued that they must have underestimated the wind speed and possibly failed to appreciate the local effects on wind speed and direction caused by nearby buildings.

The second case seems rather stronger. The height of the object was calculated by comparing the reports of the different groups of witnesses. The object seems to have contained far more energy and lasted much longer than the average lightning ball. It certainly seems worth adding to the list of possible or probable ball lightning reports. A number of good cases of ball lightning have no doubt been lost to science because they were reported as UFOs and published in the sort of book or journal which is unlikely to be available in most science libraries.

The Rapid City case is a good example of what can happen when people are predisposed to consider the ETH as a possible explanation for some UFO reports. A sighting of a bright star near the horizon by a Ground Observer Corps volunteer triggered off a series of visual and radar sightings of what appeared to those involved to be a single, puzzling UFO because of an unusual combination of circumstances on that particular night.

If the idea of extraterrestrial UFOs was not available to the witnesses to excite their imaginations it is most unlikely that two aircraft would have been sent chasing after stars.

Another lesson from this case is that accounts of UFO incidents, even in books by such authoritative writers as Ruppelt, can be very misleading and always need to be cross-checked with other sources.

Conclusions

The effects on witnesses of the ETH should always be considered when reading or investigating UFO reports. It strongly distorts many reports of unusual phenomena, or normal objects seen in unusual conditions. Some good reports may be sightings of rare and poorly understood natural phenomena. Although it is desirable for there to be multiple independent witnesses, they are no guarantee that anything really strange or unusual has taken place.

In rejecting the ETH as a blanket explanation for all puzzling UFO reports it is important not to substitute another blanket explanation, such as mirages or ball lightning. In comparing new reports with cases described in the literature it should be realised that many of these are highly inaccurate summaries of the original reports, and some of them are totally false.

It is only by separating the ETH from the UFO that any progress is likely to be made in obtaining reliable information about the unusual natural phenomena which probably generate some of the more interesting UFO reports.

3 RUPPELT, Edward J. *The Report on Unidentified Flying Objects*, New York, Ace Books, 1956, 304-308

4 MENZEL, Donald H. and BOYD, Lyle G., *The World of Flying Saucers*, New York, Doubleday, 1963, 167-170

5 THAYER, Gordon D. 'Optical and radar analyses of field cases', in GILLMOR, Daniel S., *Scientific Study of Unidentified Flying Objects*, New York, Bantam Books, 1969, 132-136



Notes Towards a Revisionist History of Abductions, Part 3

sex science and salvation

Peter Rogerson



THE fall of 1966 the abduction narratives emerged from the cosy world of the ufologists with the almost simultaneous publication of the Hill story in the *Saturday Evening Post*, and in book-form as *Interrupted Journey*, and the publication of the Villas Boas story in Coral Lorenzen's *Startling Evidence*. This was an update of her 1962 title, *The Great Flying Saucer Hoax*, aiming to cash in on the massive increase of interest in UFOs in mid-sixties America. Our imagination suggests that there was a sudden great rush of imitative Hill cases, that the image of the medical abduction was established right away. In fact this is not what happened; the abduction stories which succeeded these first two publicity-generators showed a notable lack of consistency.

The imitators came, but not of the Hills. Betty's hysterectomy and Barney's fear of his forthcoming ulcer operation could not compete with AVB's amorous adventures. The first wave of successors in the swinging sixties were imitators of Antonio, or rather they were what the salacious imagination took to be one better: the rape, or at least pretty forcible seduction of women and their possible impregnation by male ufonauts. Needless to say, these stories had long been buried, only to be unearthed when Bullard compiled his catalogue.

The series commenced very rapidly on the heels of the public release of the AVB story when the *New York Chronicle* (21 November 1966) reported a shock story from back in August in which an Australian girl, Marlene Travers, claimed that while out for an evening stroll in the country near Melbourne she had seen a silvery, glowing disc land. It was 50 ft by 10 ft and from an opening in the side emerged a tall, handsome man with luminous eyes, dressed in a loose-fitting metallic tunic. Though his speech was just a high-pitched whine, she understood by telepathy that he wished her to be the mother of his extraterrestrial child. He led her into a room which seemed to go out of focus and proceeded to have sex with her. When they had finished he led her out, but on leaving she tripped and burnt her ankle. Her friends found her with burnt legs, and there was an

indentation on the ground where the incident allegedly took place. She had been missing for seven hours, and was later found to be pregnant. (1)

Not to be outdone, the *National Tattler* (2 April 1967) reported how one Jean Sheldon, out driving in Michigan, stopped "for a breath of air" when she saw a 50 ft disc surmounted by a glowing red dome. It descended and an opening appeared in the underside, through which she was levitated on board. Here she encountered three naked male humanoids with green eyes. They too told her they wanted to mate, and she had "very exciting" sex with them for over an hour. Although this was supposed to indicate that they were biologically compatible, unlike Marlene, Jean did not become pregnant. (2)

Cordelia Donovan of California met a man dressed in a long white robe, who kidnapped her in a black Cadillac and gassed her. She awoke on board a flying saucer, where she was raped. (3) Another Californian, Claudette Cranshaw, was said to have been walking along the beach near Blanca when a luminous globe landed and six semi-humanoids pursued and raped her, as a result of which she gave birth to a still-born blue baby. (4)

It wasn't just women, however, who had erotic adventures with ufonauts. Eugene Browne of Antrim, Northern Ireland, had a surprising adventure to relate. In the autumn of 1967 he wrote to *Flying Saucer Review* claiming that the previous 17 July he was walking in a wood near his house when he saw a dull, blue-grey, dish-like object, with a rough and pitted outer surface, hovering just above the ground. From an opening in the centre two human-shaped beings, dressed in silvery suits, floated to the ground and walked into the woods. Shortly afterwards they returned and floated back up again. (5)

The following summer Browne wrote to Contact UK's *Awareness* magazine to report his abduction. On the night of 6 October 1967 he was walking home from a jazz club in Belfast, when he saw a craft in the sky, from which came a yellow light which danced around him. He felt dizzy and lost consciousness, awakening on

■1. Quoted in Frank Edward's *Flying Saucers Here and Now*, Bantam, 1969, p.86

■2. Quoted in Otto Binder's *Flying Saucers are Watching Us*, Belmont, 1968, p.32

■3. HUDSON, Jay, *Those Sexy Saucer People*, Greenleaf, 1967, quoted in John Keel's *Our Haunted Planet*, Fawcett, 1971

■4. STEIGER, B. and WRITENOUR, J. *Flying Saucers are Hostile*, Tandem, 1967, and FLAMMONDE, Paris, *Age of Flying Saucers*, Hawthorne, 1971.

■5. Letter from Eugene Brown, quoted in *World Round-Up* section of *F.S.R.* 13,6, November 1967.

a table in a windowless, oblong room, lit by a blue light from the floor. He was strapped down by metal bands attached to apparatus at the side. Four men and a woman surrounded him; they had a bluish aura. The tallest, dressed in a dark, one-piece suit, said "at last, someone who will do", and released him. The woman had long blonde hair, high cheekbones, was very fair with freckled complexion, and very thin lips. He had sex with her, and she told him they were "from another galaxy" and were experimenting to get human seed. Afterwards he was tied up again and told it would not be long before he was returned. He blacked out, recovering in a field about a mile from the original location. He saw an object which took off with a whistle as its tripod gear retracted. (6)

Now one doesn't have to be excessively cynical to see in these stories nothing but cheap exploitation pieces, and indeed at the time those who investigated Eugene Browne suspected a hoax, and it seems unlikely that Travers, Sheldon, Donovan and Cranshaw ever existed outside the minds of male tabloid feature writers. But note also that the Sheldon, Donovan and Browne stories feature that 'doorway amnesia' not found in Hill or AVB, which Bullard now tries to persuade us is evidence of authenticity.

There is no doubt about the authenticity of the second US abduction story - it doesn't have any! Jason and Robert Steiner's story was outlined in the 1967 paperback *The Terror Above Us*, by 'Malcolm Kent' and is in effect a piece of fiction by one George Wouk. (7) This was a very wooden story which nevertheless cleverly combined elements of the Hill and AVB stories. It starts with the two brothers seeing a psychiatrist because of their traumatic fear of driving together, of the whirling of old-fashioned computer tapes, and Robert's withdrawal from his previously active sex life. Under therapy they recall driving into a strange fog, seeing a UFO in the sky and hearing a beeping sound. As they emerged from the fog they saw the road ahead blocked. The beeping stopped but was replaced by "[a] silence... strange for the country... there was no sound of crickets though their noise usually filled the neighbouring woods". They are surrounded by short, "cold" beings with metallic devices on their belts. They have doorway amnesia. Jason awakes strapped down on a cold slab, unable to open his eyes. He is given an examination, concentrating on his genitals. Separately they are placed in a cell with a young woman whom they suspect is an alien in disguise, and are offered food. Jason has sex with the girl. Wouk-Kent concludes his account with words that prefigure Hopkins: "they act with scientific impunity. They kidnap, hypnotise, traumatise, drug and experiment on us as if we were guinea pigs".

Let's get this straight: a work of fiction had introduced the 'enchantment' or 'Oz factor', the supernatural cold, the doorway amnesia, the alien in disguise, the whole drama of disinterested scientists experimenting on us like guinea pigs. *The Terror Above Us* may have been more influential than we realise, after all, although ufo-logists with rare and expensive bibliographies may know that story was fiction, it doesn't follow that the average member of the reading public did.

These themes were summarised in Otto Binder's ancient-astronautish *Flying Saucers are Watching Us*, published in 1968 (8) the year before ancient astronaut themes were popularised by von Däniken. Binder quoted the ideas of a certain Max Flindt and argued that

humans were the result of aliens interbreeding with apes and that 'they' were watching over their grand experiment. Soon they will return to inaugurate the new millennial age in which "crime, poverty, urban decay, air pollution, famines" will disappear, age and infirmity will be no more and the one world would be admitted into the United Federation of Planets, which in *Star Trek* style is indistinguishable from the USA. Thus as early as 1968 was the cocktail of wild sex and apocalypse mixed.

Such tales were by no means the only themes in the early days of the abductee. Other United States stories show that modern and earlier imagery coincided. Of the latter we may point out the story from Hilliards (Ohio) in which a young man, alerted by a strange noise and the dog barking, saw some human figures emerging from an egg-shaped object via a sort of elevator. The figures placed small spheres around the craft, then a man walked across the field and appeared to talk to them. When the witness stood on a twig he alerted the figures, who chased him and inflicted a burn on his neck. They tried to get him into the craft, but gave up, dropped him, and took off. (9)

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Even more typical of modern accounts was the autumn 1966 abduction report of Philip Williams and Herman and Otto Collins, three young itinerant crop workers who claimed to have been the subject of an attempted abduction by a green-eyed, rotten-stinking bigfoot at a place near Marshall, Michigan, where a farmer said a luminous object had landed. (10) Or there was Beau Shertzer who reported that on 5 March 1967 he was with a nurse driving a 'bloodmobile' (blood transfusion service vehicle) along Rt. 2 by the Ohio River on a cold, dark night. On a deserted stretch of road they saw a white glow arise from the woods and move over the van. When Shertzer looked out of the window he was horrified to see a sort of grappling arm being lowered from the object, as if it was trying to grasp them. The object paced the vehicle, snatching at them with the giant claw. It took off when other cars approached. (11)

There was the attempted abduction of the daughter of Mrs La Marquands, at Thompson, Manitoba. The mother was in her house when she heard a beeping sound; looking outside she saw dust and leaves swirling around the house. Going outside she saw her husband and five children staring at the sky while a neighbouring

■ 6. Letter from Eugene Brown in *Awareness*, summer 1968, quoted in B. le P. Trench's *Operation Earth*, Spearman 1969

■ 7. WOLK, George (writings as Malcolm Kent) *Terror Above Us*, Tower 1967

■ 8. BINDER, Otto. *op. cit.*

■ 9. See *UFO Investigator* May-June 1967; F.S.R. 17,2, p.26; FOWLER, Raymond, *Casebook for a UFO Investigator*. Prentice Hall 1981

■ 10. GREEN, Gabriel. *Let's Face the Facts About Flying Saucers*. Popular Library, 1967, p.96

■ 11. KEEL, J. 'More From my Ohio Valley Notebook', F.S.R. 13,4, pp20-21. See also his *Mothman Prophecies* Dutton, 1975

boy was holding her eight-year-old daughter, who was rising into the sky. Overhead was a sort of rectangular object with a black underside, rotating slowly and showing alternate dark and silver edges. It then moved off. The daughter was dazed and could not remember what happened from when she first encountered the wind. (12) It is possible that this was a rather exaggerated account of a whirlwind, perhaps even one of the notorious Meaden vortices.

Of the other United States reports from this period we can chart an ascending level of abduction features. All these stories would today be swiftly renormalised into the abductionist canon.

Two Native American motorists, Billy Regay and Guy Tosie, were driving along Highway 26 at Rirey, Idaho, when they saw a light ahead and their car stalled. The lights came from a small, domed object with flashing green and orange lights revolving around the rim, which was on the highway just ahead. They saw two occupants in the dome; an opening appeared and a third figure drifted to the ground, approached then entered their car. It was about 1 m tall, with a scarred, rough face, no nose, slitlike mouth, rounded eyes and large,



high ears. The car then seemed to travel of its own accord into a field of stubble. Tosie escaped and went for help. When he returned with others they found Regay in a state of shock. The creature had spoken to him in an unintelligible, high-pitched warbling. It was joined by another creature and both returned to the craft, which took off with flames from the bottom. (13)

The story told by Rita Malley shows a further move towards modern features. She reported how on the evening of 12 December 1967 she was driving home from a friend's house in North Lansing, New York with her five-year-old son Dana. It was a dark, wild evening, and snow had started falling and the wind was interfering with her driving, making her late home for her husband's supper. At first she thought that the strange glow, lighting up her car as she drove along a deserted stretch of road, was the police after her for speeding, but when she turned round she could see nothing. Further up the road she finally saw the origin of the light: a round object 55-60 ft in diameter, with a dome on top and red and green lights underneath, too bright to look at. She looked back to speak to her son, but he sat transfixed: "...sitting straight up. His eyes... just bugging right out of his head... he wasn't looking out at the

object... his head wasn't turning."

Suddenly she realised the car was going sideways off the road, and the lights in the car dimmed out. She thought of escaping but realised they had nowhere to go. The object emitted a humming sound like a TV antenna in the wind, or a swarm of bees coming at her. Suddenly she heard a chorus of voices speaking in what sounded like broken English, almost, but not quite, as if they were coming through a loudspeaker: "Paul Donalds, Moravia, killed in or near Masena in a tractor trailer owned by Joe Etinger, Moravia". Paul Donalds was the brother of an acquaintance of Rita's from beauty school. The voices also said that Dana would not remember the time the car had stopped. After a few minutes the car seemed to drive itself back on the road. The steering wheel, which she was holding, turned by itself. When she arrived back home she had a terrific headache and was almost hysterical. That night she awoke screaming when the sound of the TV antenna on her house vibrating in the wind reminded her of the buzzing of the object. She was still suffering headaches and nightmares when Lloyd Mallan interviewed her in February 1968. (14) Paul Donalds was indeed killed in the circumstances described by the voices.

Today, who could doubt that presented with such a story, with its imagery of time-lapse, enchantment and telepathy, Rita wouldn't have been rushed round to the nearest hypnotist. Indeed, that is what did happen to another woman interviewed by William Donovan, the same investigator. She was Emma Funk who, on the night of 17 July 1967 was driving down Rt. 22 north of her hometown of Millertown, New York, at about 2325, when a black shiny object the size of a baseball flew into her headlights. It came right up to her car, seemed to brush against the windscreen then veer off to the left. When it made contact the car lit up "like a great electric light bulb". The engine and headlights failed and she lost consciousness. When she recovered the car was pointing in the opposite direction, there was a cracked area the size of a man's fist in the windscreen, and she was saying "why did it inute time-lapse."

In September she underwent hypnotic regression in which she spoke of the radio being filled with static, and "them" who turned her car round and struck her across the chest with a rod. (15) The regression was filmed as part of a 1968 BBC documentary fronted by Stephen Black. That documentary made some very pertinent points, and Black's treatment of the subject was years ahead of its time, but with the exception of John Harney, British ufologists at the time dismissed it as just another sceptical attack. Black, however, had come to conclusions that it would take mainstream ufology another twenty years even to approach, for example that a surprising number of UFO witnesses were deep-trance hypnotic subjects, what today we would call fantasy-prone. One of the significances of Mrs Funk's regression was that it was probably the first after the Hill's at a time when ufological imagery was still consolidating.

Other stories of that period include John Keel's account of "a prominent community leader in a small town in the Ohio valley", who claimed that when in the army in Germany in 1951-2 he had a twelve-hour time lapse one night after being approached by a bright light whilst guarding a downed plane. Later he

■12 First published in *Saucers, Space and Science* 52, p.6; see also RUTKOWSKI, Chris, *Unnatural History*, Chameleon, 1993, pp 26-28

■13 *UFO Investigator*, 5,1, Sept-Oct 1969, pp5-8, quoted in CREIGHTON, G. 'A New FSR Catalogue', *F.S.R.* 17,3, p29. See also KEYHOE, Donald, *UFOs: a New Look*, NICAP, 1969, p31.

■14 MALLAN, Lloyd. 'Ithica's Terrifying UFO Epidemic' in *Official Guide to UFOs* (compiled by editors of *Science and Mechanics*, Ace Books, 1968. First hand investigations by William Donovan, Richard Orr and Lloyd Mallan. Another version of this article appeared in *Fate* (UK), June 1969

■15 LORENZEN, C. and J. *New UFO Breakthrough*, Award, 1968, p.49

was plagued with dreams of triangles and squares. (16) Tony Moracco, of Clifton Springs, N.Y. suffered a three-hour time lapse while walking along Eastern Boulevard, after seeing a huge disc with orange and green lights. He was found in a dazed state by a patrolman. (17)

That the abduction imagery was also developing in the popular imagination is shown by the schoolyard rumours circulating around the Island Lake, Manitoba area as early as autumn 1966 - spring 1967. Dogs would bark for no reason and children would disappear for several hours at a time, returning to tell of little men 1 m tall, with large heads and long arms, wearing silvery suits, who had given the children a strange candy that lasted for days. They had long, 'entertaining' talks with the children. Another source heard of flying saucers landing and leaving marks on the ground. Again there was talk of small beings, dressed this time in close-fitting hoods, carrying rods which gave off beams of light and which they used to push and poke children. There were also rumours of these creatures trying to snatch children away in their sleep.

The imagery is close to the 'North Central' case of 1964 which I described in *Magonia* 47. It now looks as if this was triggered by Venus (Letters, this issue). Were these the peaks of a series of children's rumours sweeping across North America, or were they triggered by TV images? Again, we see a modern space-age version of children being 'taken' by the 'other'. (18) The idea of supernatural candy reappeared in British Columbia in 1970, and we can also see images of the alien and child molester merging. There are overtones of the Dutch Oude Pekela paedophile child abduction allegations as well.

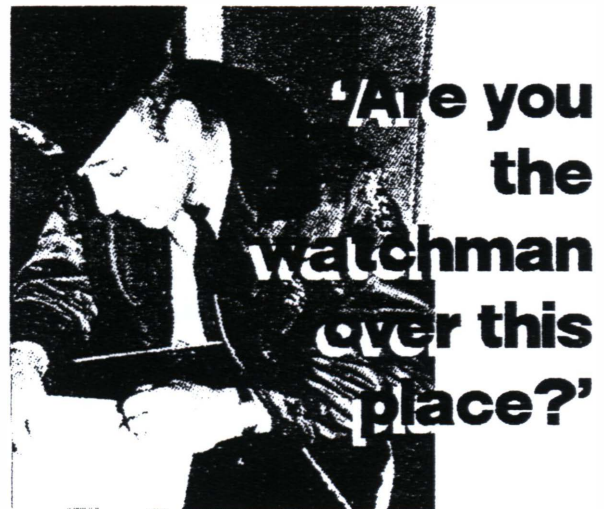
As 1967 turned into 1968, the USA was to see the return of true abduction stories. The first post-Hill 'repeater' abductee, as the one with the photographs, was a Texas farmer, Carrol Wayne Watts from the, one might think ironically named, town of Loco. Watts' story was presented in two parts. The first, published in papers such as the *Seattle Post Intelligence* of 2 April 1967, reported that this "well-known and respected" 29-year-old farmer was working in a field when he saw a silvery grey object moving at 60 m altitude. Then on the night of 31 March he saw a light on neighbouring property belonging to his uncle and went to investigate, whereupon he encountered a dull-grey cylindrical object about 30 m long and 3 m high. He said that, fearing it was a crashed experimental plane, he approached to see if he could offer assistance. Then something like an elevator door opened and he saw a deserted room, illuminated by a blue glow, in which he could see meters and dials, and something that looked like a map on the wall. There was then a loud crackling 'like a Victrola record', and an unemotional voice invited him to take a physical examination by standing against a machine. The voice said that any man who had passed the physical would be allowed on board, but no women or children could take the flight. 'They' (the occupants, or those who had passed the physical?) were stationed all over the world and no-one could stop them. Unimpressed by this offer, Watts ran off home and called the police.

About a year after going public with this first story, Watts announced a sequel. He now said that on the night of 11 April 1967, after a violent thunderstorm, he had again seen a light on his uncle's property. This time he encountered a small oval object hovering above the ground. Four men standing in an open doorway

beckoned him on board. They were just over 1.5 m tall, with wrap-round eyes, 'superficial' ears and noses and immobile, smiling mouths. They wore white coveralls. He went inside and was ushered to a flexible chair which moulded itself to the contours of his body. The lights dimmed and he felt pushed back into the chair as if by sudden acceleration, but there was no further sensation of movement. Then there was a jolt, a door opened and he was shown into a large room.

There he was stripped and his body was scanned elicate wires, while the beings stood in another room huddled round an illuminated circle. Seeing a sort of green cube, Watts hid it in the pocket of his jeans which were hanging nearby. When he dressed, one of the figures reached into the pocket to retrieve it. Watts grabbed the creature's arm, there was a brief struggle and he lost consciousness, recovering in his truck. He had only been gone for half an hour.

Watts claimed subsequent encounters, in which he took several photographs of the craft and one of a small being. Needless to say, these are quite unconvincing, though J. Allen Hynek seems to have been taken in for a while. Asked to take a lie detector test he



'failed' and then claimed that the story was a hoax contrived by a local artist and 'planted' into his mind in hypnotic sessions. In a further twist he later recanted the recantation, claiming he had deliberately failed the test following threats to him and his family. (20)

However, the photographs really prove the hoax, and the Watts' story has been excommunicated from the ufological canon. Nevertheless we can see many features which will crop up in later stories, and the construction of a new group of beings, a step further towards the Greys: smaller than the Hill's abductors, and kitted out in Socorro-style white coveralls instead of the Hill's sailor-suits. There are elements of Hill - medical examination - and aspects taken from Villas-Boas - the unsuccessful attempt to take a souvenir, the light seen whilst tending fields, as well as new additions to the pattern - first repeater abductee, doorway amnesia on the way out. We also see the way the secular initial story later slips into contactee mode. The abduction pattern has not yet settled down.

The second of the North American on-board cases is even more totally excluded from the ufological record than that of Watts'. This is the tale of 'John Grant', as told by Warren Smith, who also wrote under

■16 KEEL, J. 'Induced Amnesia', letter to the editor in *F.S.R.* 13,6, p28

■17 *Canada Guardian* 28 August 1967, quoted in *F.S.R.* 14,1 January 1968

■18 RUTKOWSKI, Chris. *op. cit.* pp17-19

■19 Pieced together from accounts in: BARKER, Gray, *MIB: the Secret Terror Among Us*, New Age Press, 1983, ch.11 'What Happened to Carroll Wayne Watts', pp117-127; WRITENOUR, J. '1967, a Busy Year for UFOs' in *Allende Letters*, edited by STEIGER and WRITENOUR, Tandem Special, 1968, pp32-35; STEIGER & WRITENOUR, *New UFO Breakthrough*, pp. 43-45

■20 BARKER, *op. cit.*

the name of Eric Norman. He related it in the 1968 magazine format pictorial special *The Allende Letters* (21). In this account John Gilbert is "the pseudonym of a sales executive employed by a well-known corporation which manufactures electronic components, computers and data processing machines", who claimed to have been abducted in March 1967 and subjected to "several startling medical, biological and sexual experiments". His car was stopped at an undisclosed destination and he was surrounded by a group of strange men about 3.5 m tall, with broad foreheads, elongated eyes and hawk like noses. The eyes disturbed him and as a result he did not look at them too closely, but got the impression they had no pupils. There was a leader dressed in blue and they spoke amongst themselves in guttural tones. He became confused and faint and was dragged towards a ramp and into a craft. He was revived and shown into a sort of control-room and given an explanation of the operation of the craft, apparently by telepathy from the 'leader'.

Disappointingly, Smith does not give details of the "medical, biological and sexual experiments" despite claiming to have 107 hours of taped interviews, investigated the case with teams of psychiatrists and been preparing a book. In fact nothing more was heard of 'John Gilbert' and all memory of this case has virtually disappeared. Why? One answer seems to be simply that the American ufological community didn't trust Smith - one prominent US ufologist warned me years ago that Smith was known as a hack who was not above making up the stories to help sell his books. Even the fragmentary Gilbert story contains too many cribs from the Hills (blue uniform, influence by touch) and though like Watts we have wrap-round eyes, the nose is taken from Betty Hill's descriptions. Elements from this story crop up in a later Smith account, that of Raymond Shearer.

It is well to remember our cavils about Smith, because he is a central character in the next abduction story, which has remained within the mainstream ufological canon, although admittedly at the margins. This is the account of policeman Herb Schirmer in Ashland, Nebraska. Early morning of 3 December 1967 he was disturbed by noises of farm livestock when he encountered red, blinking lights which he saw as windows on a saucer-shaped craft hovering a metre or so above the ground. He then thought he experienced a time-lapse and later reported a tingling sensation, headaches and nausea, a noise in his head and a red weal on his neck. In February 1968 he was subjected to hypnotic regression by Leo Sprinkle, when he 'recalled' a white, blurred object approaching his car and felt he was in communication with it - a communication which was resumed during the actual regression. This seems to have been standard contactee fare about friendly aliens from other galaxies, swept here by anti-gravity and electromagnetic forces. (23) Schirmer was not satisfied by Sprinkle's investigations, and by June had contacted Warren Smith, who arranged regression by Loring Williams.

Schirmer's story now expanded, claiming that two beings with strange eyes approached him, one of them fired a ray at him which paralysed him, he is grabbed behind the ear (a favourite place for alien attention: cf. Mr Spock's Vulcan Death Grip and a variety of implants) then is asked the strange question "Are you the watchman over this place". He is led up a ladder into the object. More clichés follow: the object is made of 100% pure magnesium - from the Ubatuba case, popularised by the Lorenzens the previous year (24); it

sucks power from electricity lines - as in Fuller's *Incident at Exeter* (25); it has a mother-ship, as per Adamski, and almost inevitably they have underwater bases in the Bermuda Triangle (where else?).

The creatures that took Schirmer were described as 1.25-1.50 m tall, with overdeveloped chests, pasty faces, slanty eyes like cats, slit mouths and with a nose flatter, longer and more prominent than a human's, on a long thin face. They wore silvery uniforms, on the front of which was a serpent logo. They were reported as planning an invasion, "but in a friendly manner", but Schirmer suspected they were not telling the whole truth. And, in a hint of things to come, humans had been picked up and used in a breeding analysis programme.

Now, the *only* question here is whether Schirmer picked up these ideas from the UFO literature before or after his December experience, and perhaps whether Smith primed him in any of it. Further, no one appears to have independently spoken to Schirmer since, though there are rumours he joined the contactee circuit.

The final North American case of this period concerned a fourteen-year-old schoolboy, David, from Calgary, Alberta, who on about 14 November 1967 ran home in the early evening saying he had been chased by a 'flying saucer'. Shortly afterwards he had a nightmare about the incident, and shortly after that he underwent hypnotic regression conducted by a local dentist, later joined by a university psychologist.

David recalled that walking home he saw an aerial object surrounded by a row of lights. It projected an orange beam onto him and drew him up into a sort of cot. Here he was studied by a group of beings 2 m tall with rough, brown, crocodile-like skin all over their naked bodies. They had holes for ears and nose, slanted eyes, slit mouth, and were hairless. They fingered him with four-fingered hands, then took him through a hallway into another room with bright lights and put him on a table. There they lifted his head and examined his hair, eyes and nose. On one occasion he said they had voices like kazoos, but on another that they did not talk. An orange light came down and he was pricked in the arm by a needle.

When the university psychologists examined him further, David recalled a childhood appendix operation, even recalling the incident under general anaesthetic, and remembered that one of the orderlies who wheeled him into the operating theatre was old with wrinkled skin, leading the psychologist to suspect that the incident was a traumatic re-enactment of the operation. (28)

These early North American cases show how a stereotype is developing. Some features, such as the wrap-around eyes and slit mouth becoming fixed, while the nose still varies between Barney Hill's description of two holes in the skull, and Betty's Jimmy Durante job. The occupants' variations on a theme depending, dare one suggest, on what version of the Hill story the percipients encountered, and what details struck them at the time. ●●●

In the next part of this revisionist history, Peter Rogerson looks at the way in which through the seventies and eighties the descriptions of the abducting aliens began to approach a standard form

■21 SMITH, Warren. 'I Visited a Flying Saucer' in *Allende Letters*, pp55-58

■22 SPRINKLE, Leo. 'Hypnotic and Psychic Implications in the Investigation of UFO Reports' in LORENZEN, C. and J. *Encounters with UFO Occupants*, Berkley, 1976, pp256-329, especially pp268-87. Also GILMOUR, Daniel (ed.) *Scientific Study of Unidentified Flying Objects*, Bantam 1969, pp389-391

■23 SMITH, Warren (writing as Eric Norman) *Gods, Demons and UFOs*, Lancer, 1970, pp169-93

■24 LORENZEN, C. *Flying Saucers; the Startling Evidence for Invasion from Outer Space*, New American Library, 1966, ch.p

■25 FULLER, John. *Incident at Exeter*, Putnam 1966

■26 ADAMSKI, George. *Inside the Space Ships*, Arco 1956

■27 LORENZEN, C. and J. *Flying Saucer Occupants*. New American Library 1967, ch.1, contains a number of these cases now known to be hoaxes

■28. ALLAN, W.K. 'Crocodile Skinned Entities at Calgary', *F. S.R.* 20,6, pp25-6; MAGOR, John, *Our UFO Visitors*, Harcourt, 1977, pp165-9; DE HERRERA, John *Etherean Invasion*, Hwong 1978, pp26-9. As this story was not published until the modern abduction era had begun, it is possible that some alteration in emphasis may have taken place.



LETTERS

Dear Sir

Your article 'Virtual Banality' is so much of a landmark event that I am tempted to predict that 'the Val Phenomenon' will take its place alongside the 'Oz factor' and 'the Philip effect' as a reference point in our efforts to comprehend the processes at work in anomalous experience. That your colleague's experience is essentially identical with the more exotic experiences of Linda Cortile and Betty Andreasson is, I would say, beyond question. The same process is surely at work.

Val's story is welcome precisely because these exotic features are absent, because its everyday ordinarieness - with its one little splash of extraordinariness - enables us to see the mechanism at work without the dramatic triggerings which distract us from the form to the content. In the same way the ghost stories which are most revealing of the process involved are not those involving cowled monks and rattling chains, but apparitions of acquaintances wearing their everyday clothes engaged in everyday activities. Likewise, the 'past life' stories which most clearly betray the implausibility of the alleged phenomenon are not the 'I was a priestess in Atlantis' claims but the humdrum daily life stories à la Bridey Murphy.

However, we must not suppose that the content is *nothing more* than superficial trappings. The story is important to the individual, but only in the same way that myth and legend are important to the community - as indicators of underlying currents whose value is metaphorical rather than literal. The difference between the banality of Val's experience and the exoticism of the others is the personal contribution provided by the creative imagination of the witness. For reasons unknown to themselves - even less to those who appoint themselves their guides, counsellors and therapists - the Lindas and Bettys select an alien visitor scenario as the appropriate setting for their fantasies. Others, as we know, find a religious theme more congenial, yet others go for abstract archetypes into which they read a cosmic significance.

No doubt Val's experience, too, was

significant of *something*; no psychoanalyst worth his £50 an hour would fail to discern a profound meaning in that imagined driveway, a symbolic clue to who knows what childhood trauma... Well, if I were Val I'd let sleeping trauma lie. Though if next time she should see, not just a driveway, but a domed disc parked on it, with these three figures emerging...

Yours, Hilary Evans,
Lewisham, SE3.

Dear Magonia,

At one level I am delighted to see Peter Rogerson and John Rimmer finally becoming aware of the reality of a spectrum of alternate states of consciousness (ASC) that revolve around the so-called 'lucid dream' state, and the significance of such states regarding matters like so-called 'UFO abductions'. At another level I'm quite disturbed that reference to these matters is only now being made (without the usual, characteristically sniffy *Magonia* sarcasm), so many years down the line. Where have you guys been? It's not as if you haven't had the opportunity to perceive the significance of these things. For instance, my 1992 book, *Symbolic Landscapes*, and to a lesser extent *Shamanism and the Mystery Lines* (also 1992) both have more to say of relevance to the UFO abduction question than most of the books dedicated to that topic. Don't you read them? Or is it because of a knee-jerk dismissive reaction to the 'earth mysteries' box you perceive me as being in (an illusion but there you go) that you don't bother to learn from our research? All I've seen in what might be called the psychosocial small press is a dismissive rant on *Shamanism and the Mystery Lines* by Kevin McClure in his *Wild Places*, based it seems on prejudices aroused by the faddish overuse of the term 'shamanism' by New Agers. I accept the term is overused but it still has a real meaning and it is this that my book addresses, and it is that meaning that all UFO mags, including *Magonia*, ought to be getting more familiar with.

While not wanting to disturb your new found lucidity, I do think it is time

that you *Magonia* regulars woke up to the realities some of us have been addressing for several years.

With best wishes, Paul Devereux
Penzance, Cornwall.

Your Editor replies, with characteristically sniffy sarcasm: Where have we been, Paul? If you, to recycle a splendid phrase of your own, got off your supercilious backside and read what we *Magonia* regulars have actually been saying for the last twenty-five years (God help us!) you would see that we have hardly been slow to recognise the importance of ASC: it is a subject we have discussed and returned to many times in that period. As for shamanism, if you could take some time off to read other peoples' books you will have seen that it is something I discussed in the context of UFO abductions in my 1984 book *Evidence for Alien Abductions*. We've been discussing these realities for years; we're just glad that some ley hunters have at last broken away from Tony Wedd's approach to UFOs and are able to join us.

Dear John

I'm surprised that whoever wrote the Back Page of *Magonia* 48 doesn't know that there is a much closer connection between UFOs and Philip Glass than the coincidence of the name Itaipu. Glass actually wrote a whole opera, *1000 Airplanes on the Roof* on the subject of UFO abductions, with book by playwright David Henry Hwang. I attended a performance of this opera back in 1988, and it seemed too heavily influenced by the tales of Whitley Strieber. The text was published, both in a large-format picture book, and in a compilation of plays by Hwang, but these books are now nearly impossible to obtain. Biographies of Glass never mention *1000 Airplanes on the Roof*, nor have I ever been able to find a recording of it, in spite of the fact that Glass is supposed to be one of the most frequently recorded of all living composers. I can only speculate that he must have been embarrassed to acknowledge that he ever touched this subject.

Sincerely, Robert Davis,
Dallas, Texas.

VIDEO REVIEWS

25 Years Ago (4)

MUFOB vol. 2, no. 3 was something of a landmark, carrying, as it did, the first recorded published writings of our colleague Peter Rogerson. Peter's letter, written, it would seem, by a dyslexic spider, was even then a typical Rogersonian production, spraying ideas and 'what ifs' profligately: is there a UFO base under Rushen Castle in the Isle of Man? No, but hauntings could be 'highly localised flap areas', and as researchers have since discovered, investigating the whole range of strange phenomena from the 1904-05 era could be very rewarding indeed.

John Harney discussed the reaction of officialdom to the UFO phenomenon, concluding that their sceptical response is "inevitable, and must be accepted under present social and scientific circumstances", concluding with a plea, valid even more today, that significant reports should be investigated "by people who are seriously interested in the subject, free from the 'circus' atmosphere generated by reports which receive much credence and publicity" Indeed.

Volume 2, number 4 represented a production breakthrough, with for the first time a fully-printed cover adorned with photographs of editors Harney, Rimmer and Sharp in characteristic pose in the bar of *La Broche*, a quiet Liverpool watering hole where our editorial meetings were conducted. Centrepiece of the issue was my much quoted and much reprinted article "The UFO as an Anti-Scientific Symbol". Accompanied by an illustration from one of the influential but ephemeral underground magazines of the era, it was redolent of the era of late-sixties hippydom, it was one of the key texts which helped to establish the image of MUFOB, and helped confirm the emergence of an 'alternative', non-ETH approach to ufology: one of the earliest of the 'New Ufologies' that flourished in the seventies.

This shared the pages of MUFOB with another contribution from Arthur Shuttlewood, who for some reason had taken a liking to us at the time. This was a typical piece, describing the bizarre happening around Warminster, in Arthur's inimitable style: "we can be quietly confident that a greater intelligence from a different dimension on our earth, in concert with extraterrestrial travellers who are more enlightened in universal knowledge, will be keeping a wary eye on these threats and could even neutralise the launching of nuclear warheads onto unsuspecting people in the next decade." Looks like they did, didn't they. ●●●

UFOs: the Evidence, and Visitors from Space

Both of these titles have been launched by Labyrinth Videos and their respective covers are dressed up with a classic shot of a UFO in flight, and a close up painting of a grey looking into the viewer's eyes. The suggestion of the sleeves is that the two titles are complementary efforts dealing with different aspects of the phenomenon. Not so.

What we have here are two fairly similar versions of the ETH's Greatest Hits, and the same faces are in evidence in both videos. If you're up for forking out twenty-five quid for a double dose of Tony Dodd, Virgil Armstrong and Wendelle Stevens then fine. If not then the differences, such as they are, will matter.

UFOs: the Evidence clocks in a few minutes longer and contains some film footage. On the down side this effort struggles to reach superficiality and shows clear evidence of padding out with computer graphics. For the most part shots of some computer generated cosmos back drawings of greys as slow and disembodied voices spout passages of alienspeak from the more questionable of the contactee tomes. The spirit of Adamski is alive and well in these frames and his film footage is given an airing along with comments on the performance capabilities of the space-ships on show. Dissenting voices, suggesting perhaps that the fast moving black spaceship in the top of the picture is a piece of cardboard on a string, are totally absent.

By the time we reach the highly questionable claims of Elizabeth Klarer towards the end of the show the idea is established that anyone claiming contact is telling the truth. The commentary even intones the fact that Elizabeth Klarer is "a woman of great wisdom".

The claims of some of the contactees and witnesses contradict each other and if you're clued up enough to read *Magonia* then you'll see the problems at a glance, but this isn't really the point. What we have here is almost 90 minutes of populist

propaganda for the E.T. crowd. Worth it if you want video copies of some of the classic UFO film clips or simply an undemanding run through the greatest hits of ufology. Otherwise, avoid like the loony on the bus.

Visitors from Space started life in Finland and like so many of the first wave of rock bands from the outposts of fashion it makes the right noises and tries hard but still leaves you feeling that good intentions are not any kind of substitute for substance. Most of the meat is provided by the classic cases that have been done to death in other videos. Roswell, Vilas-Boas and Kalahari all make their obligatory appearances and find themselves intercut with shots of cameras clicking, stock pictures of cities like New York and Rio, and the odd shot of a Finnish journalist nodding earnestly in response to another pearl of ufologist's wisdom.

To be fair, this video is the more critical of the two, but that amounts to the admission that Adamski is 'controversial', and Stanton Friedman's structured dismissal of the arguments of Klass, Randi and Karl Sagan.

The video has actually gained the odd thing in translation. For example Tony Dodd has been transformed into Anthony Dodd and seems to have gone back to work in the police force. At another point we are told that UFO witnesses are not simply "uneducated country people" and the next shot we see is a portrait of former US president Jimmy Carter. Satire?... probably not.

The video drags in places for lack of any film footage of UFOs but it does have an appearance from Budd Hopkins which succinctly states the current pro-abduction case, and there are a handful of little known Finnish cases given comprehensive coverage. One utterly bizarre encounter details the abduction of a car and occupant and their eventual landing on a strange planet.

On the strength of the local material and the level of detail *Visitors from Space* shades it for me as the more essential of the two, even if it does manage to locate the corn circles in "the north of England".

Neil Nixon

Pressure of space means that we have had to hold over our Book Reviews. We hope to have a bumper book section next issue, so we would be glad to receive books for review, or to receive reviews for publication, of any recently published book related to the subjects we cover in *Magonia*. And as readers will know that can be as wide as you want it to be. We would also be interested in news and comments on new periodicals. Please send material to the address on Page Two.

HOLD THE BACK PAGE

Miscellaneous ramblings from the ufological fringe

BUFORA: Business as usual

Disappointment at the University of Marylebone Road when BUFORA's AGM did not end in the expected bloodbath, largely due to the absence of the main protagonists after a series of last minute family crises (including the arrival of the offspring of Britain's greatest Not-Quite-an-Abductee). The assembled suits on the platform were thus relieved of the problem of debating another plan (complete with management structure flow chart - wow! are these people professionals or what?) for shuffling around the BUFORA bureaucracy and creating new private empires. The only embarrassment in an otherwise routine meeting was when, on re-electing defunct Council members, someone had the bad taste to point out that one of the candidates was not actually a member of BUFORA. The meeting decided to re-elect him so long as he promised faithfully to join as soon as possible, which was a bit difficult, as he was one of the absentees, but everyone thought he was a good sport and *would* have promised had he been there.

This was all too much for one of the Oldest Members, who called for more "discipline, military discipline", which sent a brief *frisson* of delight through the more masochistic elements in the audience, but we were spared a demonstration.

The second part of the evening comprised a presentation billed as "an exciting selection of footage from Sky TV" - surely the definition of an oxymoron. Whether sitting and watching three satellite TV programmes on video is a suitable activity for a BUFORA meeting is something the organisers must decide for themselves. There were some interesting shots of curious light phenomena recorded from a space-shuttle, but the commentary by Richard Hoagland ensured that no-one was likely to take it seriously (or was that the plan?)

Presenter Miles Johnson concluded by making such scientifically meaningless remarks as "if we had control over space and if we had control over gravity, we would have control over time": well yes, and the tooth-fairy as well, probably. Such nonsense went down well with the audience. There was a time, in the mid-80's

when BUFORA audiences seemed to be improving. I can remember being at meetings when intelligent and (gulp!) sceptical questions were asked. The little old ladies in tennis shoes had, I thought, been pensioned off. Now they have been replaced by earnest looking youths and gentlemen of uncertain age with ill-fitting syrups who seem to eagerly lap-up all sorts of nonsense.

BUFORA obviously think that with their exciting new flow-charts they are on the road to a glorious future as a limited company, but my stockbroker still advises against buying shares. A few weeks ago I gave a talk to a group of people describing themselves as wiccans, pagans, witches and ritual magicians - the sort of people who would be derided as unscientific loonies by BUFORA high command. I found a much greater spirit of open-minded enquiry and intelligent scepticism at that meeting that I have ever seen at a BUFORA assembly. More people than the traditional *Magonia* mobsters are now questioning just what good BUFORA does beside massaging the egos of men in suits who like to pretend they are running a big business (the full page of accountants' jargon preceeding the BUFORA balance sheet in the Agenda is a gem). There is a rapidly widening gap between those individual BUFORA members who are actually 'doing ufology' and the bulk of members who just want a 'UFO club', and it is not going to be bridged by a few new flow-charts. I found it significant that in a hall full of about 150 people, when the time came for voting on AGM motions there were only about 25 to 30 actual BUFORA members present.

The accounts show that 'the Company' spent £1,000 last year on research, but nearly £5,000 on administration and stationery: I think we can see where the bureaucrats' priorities lie! Oddly no one questioned the £8,000 spent on *UFO Times*, and the rise in subscription to £20 a year to pay for it. For just £4.00 you can get a sub. to *Magonia*, and save £16 to go toward the higher admission charge to BUFORA meetings for non-members. You could get eight lectures for that, surely enough for all but the most determined masochist craving discipline! ●●●

But I read it in the paper!

Editor Emeritus Harney brings us a copy of his local paper *The Bracknell Times* (24 February 1994) which is remarkable for carrying three classic urban legends on its first sheet. The main story on the front page describes how a bogus female social worker attempted to kidnap a two-year-old boy being looked after by a babysitter. The woman, who said she wanted to take the child away for 'assessment', was displaying familiar badges of authority: "smartly dressed in a navy suit and carrying a clipboard and folder" (of course, we all know that *real* female social workers wear scruffy dungarees and lethal metal ear-rings). The suspicious babysitter sensibly demanded identification, whereupon the bogus social worker scuttled away.

Next is the 'cruel hoax': local people are collecting vast numbers of old crisp packets to help buy a wheelchair for a crippled child "who may not even exist". In local pubs the regulars began amassing the greasy hoard until snack food company Walkers confirmed it was a hoax. "I think it's sick" said pub landlady Jaquie Noquet. As in all such stories no-one has any idea where the idea started so a non-existent "callous hoaxer" cops the blame. Perhaps the real message of these stories is that we are all so bemused by the bizarre variety of *real* charity stunts that we are ready to believe anything if it's described as being "for charity".

I quote the final story directly: "Fire-fighters were called to dampen the flames of passion after a woman was handcuffed to her bed during a love session... She had asked her boyfriend to snap on the cuffs to add a bit of spice to the evening, but it all fell flat [what exactly? Ed.] when the key snapped in the lock. Police called out the firecrew at 2.55 a.m. A Bracknell fireman admitted: 'Rumours are rife and there's been a lot of sniggering, but we dealt with the matter in a professional way'".

So, there you have it: three of the classic urban legends, all, apart from the last one, quoting named people, on one page of a local paper. Is this a record, or can your local rag do better? Mystery prize for the best submission. ●●●